

STRESS IN THE SUPERINTENDENCY

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

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BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

DECEMBER 2017

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BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

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ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION PROJECT: STRESS IN THE SUPERINTENDENCY

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There is little information on the topic of stress experienced by public school superintendents. There are gaps in research regarding the stressors that increase the occupational stress experienced by public school superintendents and methods these individuals use to combat occupational stress. This study searched for clarification of these missing pieces by surveying public school superintendents in the state of Indiana. Participants in this study included 184 practicing public school superintendents. Survey methodology was employed utilizing the Administrative Stress Index (Gmelch, 1982) and additional open-ended responses, which were coded by frequency. One-way ANOVAs were conducted based on demographic variables, individual stressors, an overall stress score, and five stress factors identified as administrative constraints, administrative responsibilities, interpersonal relations, intrapersonal conflicts, and role expectations.

The top stressor reported by superintendents was “Complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies.” Findings also indicated that school board relationships and task overload were stress contributors, as identified by the superintendents. These results

highlighted a need for public school superintendents to pursue professional development focused on school board relationships and collaborative leadership. Results of inferential analyses revealed a significant difference in how men and women superintendent respondents experienced stress within the category of intrapersonal conflicts. More specifically, women reported higher stress in some areas of decision-making (making decisions that impact others) and in not feeling fully qualified to handle the job. These findings suggested that female superintendents should seek ways to collaborate and support each other in a role dominated by males.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to...

My husband Mike, who completed this doctoral program right by my side. This dissertation and degree should include both of our names. I cannot even begin to say thank you for the words of encouragement, the hugs and reassurance when I was frustrated and discouraged, the celebrations of the milestones and finish lines, the meals you brought to me, the hundreds of loads of laundry you did on your own, the reminders to sleep, and mostly for loving me as I am. You never doubted me, not once, not even when I doubted myself. You are one of the strongest people I know. You make me a better person and I am more proud to be your wife than you could ever imagine. I am so grateful that God blessed me with you.

My parents who have always been my biggest cheerleaders. The hundreds, if not thousands of phone calls on my way home from work, the texts checking in to see how I was progressing with my coursework or writing, and the reminder that there is always a light at the end of the tunnel. You have celebrated the highs and lifted me up from the lows. You rode this roller coaster with me and never once doubted that I could do it. You have celebrated learning with me from the day I was born. Thank you for pushing and supporting me to do things I never imagined I could do. I love you so much.

My sister who never backs down from a challenge. You hate 12 point, double-spaced, Times New Roman font as much as I do. You know when to laugh and you know what it feels like to be overwhelmed by something you chose to do. You remind me “it’s in their best interest” and we share the same hope that nobody realizes we have absolutely no idea what we are doing. You mean more to me than you could ever know and I am extremely grateful to call you my best friend.

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CHAPTER 1

Stress is to the human condition what tension is to the violin string: too little and the music is dull and raspy; too much and the music is shrill or the string snaps. Stress can be the kiss of death or the spice of life. (Miller & Smith, 1993, p. 160)

The topic of stress in management has been the center of both business and educational research since the early 1980's (Gmelch & Swent, 1982). In order to understand the necessity of further stress research for those individuals serving in school district administration, it is important to understand the research on stress both inside and outside the field of education, the effects of stress on a superintendent over time, those magnifiers that intensify the experience of stress, and the necessary coping strategies to help negate the negative impact stress has on the individual serving as a public school superintendent.

As a sitting principal who is considering the position of superintendent, it is important to understand as many facets of the role as possible. Anyone who is considering serving as a public school superintendent understands that there is stress associated with the position. Each individual has to determine if the stress is worth the service and potential success. For that reason, it is necessary to dig deeper; to understand more than just the overall experience of stress that accompanies the position. The public school superintendents in the state of Indiana have knowledge, experience, and understanding of the stress they experience on a daily basis. As someone who aspires to join their ranks, this research can provide insight into their experiences and potentially educate those who aspire to serve. This information may even inform and support those who have already answered the calling.

The early understanding of stress came from Hans Selye (1956), who studied the impact of injected hormones on rats. A critical take-away from his work was the discovery of physiological changes experienced by the rats. Different groups of rats were injected with various levels and types of hormones for a drug trial. Regardless of what hormone was administered through injection, a common physiological response took place across trial groups. The rats were observed to have an anxiety like reaction to the needle used for the injection. Because of these responses, Selye discovered a concrete, observable definition of stress. He defined stress as “the state manifested by a specific syndrome, which consists of all the nonspecifically induced changes within a biologic system” (1956, p. 54).

In 1974, research led Selye to identify a three-stage stress process consisting of alarm reaction, resistance, and exhaustion. This is where his research ended due to his belief that there was no best way to cope with stress effectively since every person experiences different levels of stress and also responds differently. Although Selye’s research regarding stress ended, he laid the foundational framework by which stress is studied today.

The next wave of stress research centered on the topic of work-related stress. General research surrounding occupational stress began in the 1970’s. These findings clarified the factors of stress to include the responsibility load, excessive hours, time pressure, and poor working conditions (Caplan, Cobb, & French, 1975; Caplan & Jones, 1975; Cooper & Marshal, 1976; House, 1974). In a study of occupational stressors, McGrath (1976) identified six possible sources of stress in an organizational setting: task-based stress, role-based stress, stress intrinsic to the behavior setting, stress arising from the physical environment, stress arising from the social environment, and stress within the person’s system. This was the impetus for stress research to become more focused on the field of education.

In 1982, one of the key researchers of stress in education, Dr. Walter Gmelch, began his trek to better understand stress in educational leadership. Gmelch's work provided the theoretical foundation for this study (Gmelch & Swent, 1982, 1983; & Gmelch, Wilke, & Lovrich, 1986). The depth of his research and summary of his findings will be shared in the literature review to follow.

The topic of stress in the general workplace was extensively studied in the 1990's. In 1994, a review of literature identified over 100,000 studies that had been conducted with the word "stress" as a key word included in research questions (Gmelch & Burns, 1994; Gmelch & Chan, 1994). During this span of research, the findings of the 1970's studies were verified and deeper research was dedicated to evaluation of stress from the standpoint of physical health, marital and family problems, psychological well-being, gender, level of management, and age (Ho, 1995; Raju & Madhu, 1994; Wilson, Larson, & Stone, 1993).

In 2014, Jashandeep Singh completed his first study of stress centered solely on managers. Specifically, he studied marketing executives where he found one of the largest impacts of stress to employers was employee turnover. He went so far as to say, "In today's world, the idea of working one job at one company, or even in the same type of occupation for life, is an 'elusive dream'" (2014a, p. 22). In 2007, the Harvard Business Review published a study stating 50% of the largest American firms will have a new CEO between the years 2008 and 2011 due to the pressures and strains associated with their positions. The review also identified that the employees of an additional 25,000 newly acquired companies will report to new leadership.

Practitioners and scholars in the field of educational leadership have raised concerns regarding high levels of turnover in the superintendency (Grissom & Mitani, 2016; Kowalski,

McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011; Tekniepe, 2015). Twenty-one percent of Indiana public school superintendents retired between the years of 2012-2013 (Boyland & Ellis, 2015). This does not include relocations, resignations, or other reasons for leaving the position. This percentage was higher than the average yearly retirement rate for the ten years prior, which was 6.8 percent (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011; Boyland & Ellis, 2015). Was this increase due to attrition or did stress play a factor in this high rate of turnover? Although that question has not been answered scientifically, it does raise the need for better understanding of the factors that are considered when one makes the decision to leave the superintendency.

Problem Statement

There is a gap in the research surrounding stress in the superintendency. Although the focus on this topic is increasing, there is no comparison to the many studies completed for those serving as building level administrators (Boyland, 2011; Grissom, Loeb, & Mitani, 2015; Poirel, Lapointe, & Yvon, 2012; Poirel, & Yvon, 2014; Wells, 2013a; Wells, 2013b). This gap is evidenced by the scarcity of citations in recent publications. Upon conducting a search of the research surrounding educational leadership and stress, the majority of sources on the list of findings were focused on the position of building leadership, not district leadership. When searching specifically for stress in the superintendency, the prominent resources were published between 1982 and 2005 and are still the resources cited in the most recent research that has been conducted (Robinson & Shakeshaft, 2016; Simpson, 2013; Tekniepe, 2015).

In order to identify factors that may lead to increased tenure, lower retirement percentages, and other factors that may positively impact student achievement, there is a need to continue research on stress experienced by superintendents working in an ever-changing role. A

study in 2006, the first of its kind, found the factors and elements of emotional intelligence for Indiana district educational leaders at a level of critical need. District leadership must have the ability to self-manage as well as effectively partner with others, yet these skills were one of four recommendations in need of attention and support (CHORUS, 2006). Prior to this report, stress experienced by district educational leadership in Indiana had never been a focus of study.

By exploring factors of stress identified by Indiana public school superintendents, better connections may be drawn to the coping strategies necessary to reduce stress in the profession. This research is designed to better identify and describe the variations of stress experienced by the current population of Indiana superintendents through the lenses of the following independent variables: gender, age, total years in current position, total years as a superintendent, race/ethnicity, approximate percentage of minority students, approximate percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced status, and location of the school district (urban, suburban, rural).

The desired outcome of this study was to better understand the factors that influence the stress levels of current superintendents. There are two main gaps in the literature that this research addressed: identification of the stress levels experienced by public school superintendents; and the potential impact on such levels if a superintendent's school board members understand and are willing to implement measures to potentially reduce the negative elements, thus potentially leading to longer tenure for the superintendent.

This research was completed with the hope to assist current and future superintendents in their understanding of what causes stress, both positively and negatively; how to identify the impact of stress personally experienced; and the importance of managing negative stress for the benefit of themselves and the students they serve. Without specific research on stress in district educational leadership of today, achieving balance may be elusive for the majority of individuals

who chose to serve in a career identified as stressful since the 1970's (Caplan, Cobb, & French, 1975; Caplan & Jones, 1975; Cooper & Marshal, 1976; House, 1974). Not only can this research assist in personal and individual utilization, but it also increases scope and understanding for this particular topic in which the number of existing studies is limited.

Theoretical Framework

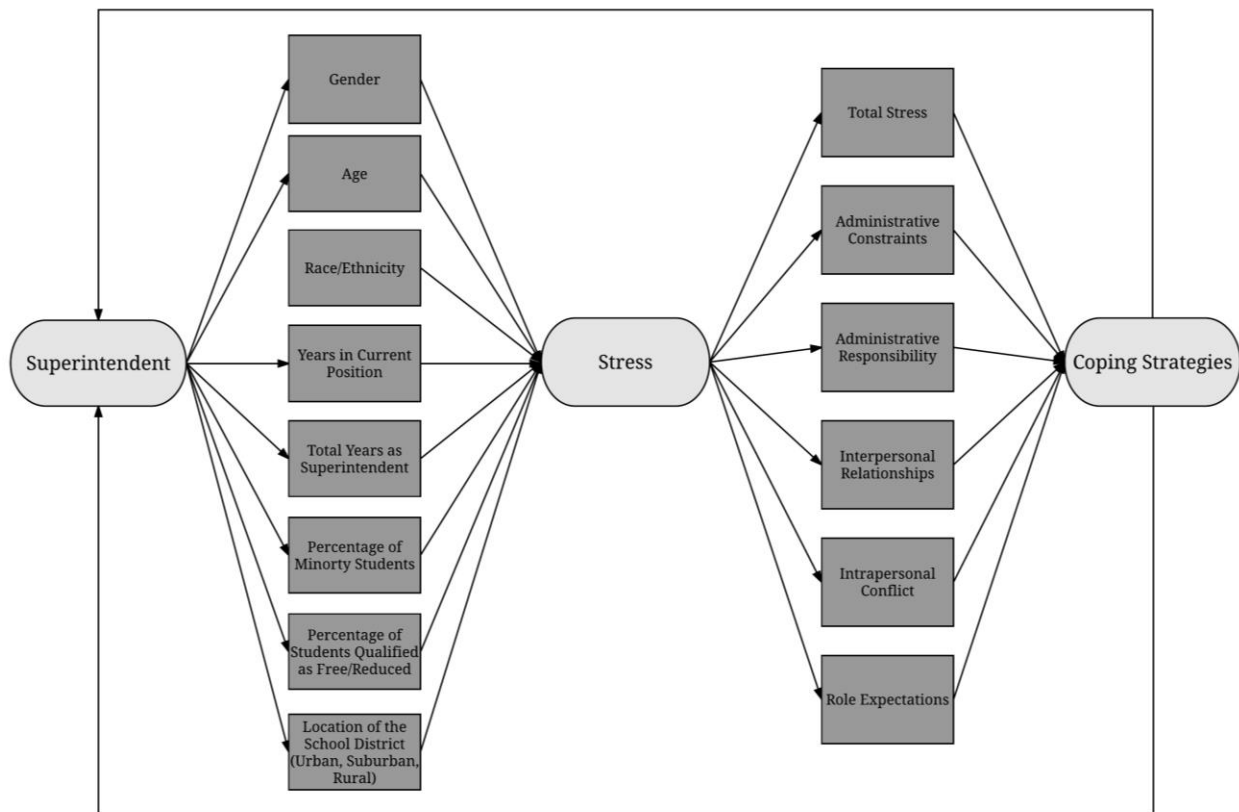
As stated above, stress in the superintendency is already understood as part of the occupation. This research furthered the understanding of the causes that influence stress, the portions of the job that raise the stress level the most, and potential opportunities to combat stress. The information collected was organized using the five factors of stress developed by Dr. Gmelch and Dr. Swent (1982). The specific details of the survey instrument developed by Dr. Gmelch and Dr. Swent are found in Appendix A, while the five factors are described here.

The five factors pulled from Gmelch's research are administrative constraints, administrative responsibility, interpersonal relations, intrapersonal conflict, and role expectations. Gmelch's findings suggested that all individual causes of stress in the superintendency fall within these five factors (Gmelch & Swent, 1982). Administrative constraints are those connected to inadequate time, number of meetings, and required procedures. Administrative responsibilities are those related to evaluations, negotiations, and supervision. Interpersonal relations caused by stress surface when resolving differences between those who work with the superintendent. Examples of these are clients, colleagues, and supervisors. Intrapersonal conflict is the struggle between one's performance and personal values. Stress related to role expectations is caused by the difference in personal expectations and the expectations established by those the superintendent serves. These five factors frame this research. Each is discussed in greater detail in a later section of the literature review.

In addition to the five factors identified in Dr. Gmelch's and Dr. Swent's (1982) research, the demographic components of this study allowed for deeper interpretation of the data collected. A goal of this research was to identify and increase understanding of the factors that may cause or increase stress. In order to ensure the problem arrived at an informative resolution, the following theoretical framework (Figure 1) was employed as a means to assist the pathway of the research.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework of Superintendent Stress



Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to better understand the factors of stress reported by Indiana public school superintendents and to investigate which of those factors creates the

most strain on these individuals. This information was gathered to heighten understanding of stress in the superintendency. The analysis and interpretation of the data may expose new strategies for increasing superintendent tenure and personal awareness of their stress levels, as well as potentially advise hiring committees and school boards in their attempt to secure and retain effective superintendents.

Research Questions

1. What job issues and responsibilities do public school superintendents perceive to be stressful?
2. How do the variables of gender, age, total years in current position, total years as a superintendent, race/ethnicity, approximate percentage of minority students, approximate percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced status, and location of the school district (urban, suburban, rural) impact perceived stress?
3. What coping strategies do public school superintendents identify as successful in managing job stress?

Significance of the Study

This study has significance because the results provide Indiana superintendents a greater ability to identify stress within themselves and inform them on how to make personal and professional changes to cope with factors of stress. This preparation, avoidance, or response to stress may potentially influence a superintendent's ability to serve more effectively.

An additional benefit of exploring specific factors of stress lay in the evaluation of the school district's functioning. Mass and Mass (2016) described a school district as a leadership architecture that operates as "the neural network of organization that translates deciding into doing (p. 1)." The levels of the architecture include governance (school board), executive

(superintendent), administrator (building principal), manager (building assistant principal), and practitioner (teachers). When these levels work well together, the structure is strong. If there is weakness in any role, such as the stress experienced by superintendents, there is the possibility of a crack in the foundation. This study identified trends in stressful components of the superintendency throughout the state of Indiana. Results of this research provide district-level personnel and school boards the information to be reflective and potentially minimize the stress-causing factors that may shake the foundation of the school district's structure.

Finally, professional organizations, such as the Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents, may also benefit from the investigations of this study. Professional development and support may be more applicable following further awareness of the actual level and factors of stress experienced. Knowledge that clarifies areas of need might allow for intentional support, where necessary, in a time of readiness.

Delimitations and Assumptions

Delimitations are boundaries in a study that have been established by the researcher (Roberts, 2010). A more practical definition of delimitations is to “put a fence around the study” (McCaslin & Scott, 2003, p. 457). There are two main delimitations within this study. The first is in the selected population, which is narrowed to Indiana public school superintendents. The researcher selected this delimitation due to personal investment and accessibility of participants.

An additional delimitation is in the timeline. The survey was conducted during the summer of 2017. Administration of the single participation survey design took place within a three-week window. The purpose of this delimitation was to increase the relevancy of the present understanding and experience of stress.

Assumptions are defined as what a researcher takes for granted relative to the study (Roberts, 2010). Assumptions for this study include the anticipation that the participants in this study answer all interview questions openly and honestly. In response to this assumption the survey was conducted anonymously in hopes of gathering the most authentic responses.

An additional assumption was that all participants of this study have experienced some level of stress while serving as a superintendent.

Definition of Terms

ACUTE STRESS. Short-lived stress, which originates from demands and pressures of the recent past and anticipated demands and pressures of the near future (American Psychological Association, n.d.).

ASI. Administrative Stress Index created by Dr. Walter Gmelch and Dr. Boyd Swent in 1982.

BURNOUT. Exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration (Spaniol & Caputo, 1979).

CHRONIC STRESS. The pressures in life that make functioning difficult. Examples include losing a loved one, inability to secure employment over a period of time, or any negative pressure that persists for an extended period of time (American Psychological Association, n.d.).

MANAGEMENT. Any position in which one person is responsible for monitoring other employees, making decisions for productivity, or leading projects (Manage, n.d.). In Indiana public school education, the role of district or corporation management is titled superintendent.

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS. Stress which occurs when there is a discrepancy between the demands of the workplace and an individual's ability to carry out and complete these demands.

Factors may include responsibility load, excessive working hours, time pressures, and working conditions (Gmelch, 1982; Sauter et al., 1999).

STRESS. A physical reaction to something that disrupts equilibrium. A feeling of anxiousness or frustration (Stress, n.d.).

Summary

Whether or not there is stress in the superintendency is not a debate. How is stress present? What are the various levels of stress? How does stress manifest in public school superintendents? Can coping strategies impact longevity and turnover in public school superintendents? These are just a few of the many questions worth asking when exploring the topic of stress and the superintendency.

Ultimately, the awareness of the presence of stress, understanding the amplifiers or impacting variables, and the ability to recognize stress experienced within an individual may lead to superintendents who are more aware of their personal experiences with stress.

Superintendents who are more aware may have increased ability to cope with the individual, identifiable factors of stress.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Background

Research has been conducted about stress in educational leadership. Prior studies have focused on specific populations: male versus female, department chairs, rural superintendents, university faculty, African American versus White university faculty, and school principals in the US and British Columbia (Gmelch & Burns, 1984; Gmelch, Wilke, & Lovrich, 1986; Tung, 1980). There is a need to focus on stress in the superintendency in hopes of recruiting and retaining highly effective individuals into this leadership position.

One concern of the committees hiring superintendents is a shortage at the state level. Dr. Lynn Lehman, member of the Indiana Superintendent Search Team, reported “From my perspective, the pool of candidates seeking to become superintendents is shrinking and typically contains individuals with less, if any, experience in a central office role” (Dr. Lynn Lehman, personal communication, March 7, 2017). Although this cause for concern is becoming more prevalent, there are conflicting reports regarding its actuality. Anecdotal reports and popular opinions stated there was little empirical evidence to support the claim of a shortage (Bjork & Keedy, 2003; Olivárez, 2013), but the 2010 superintendent decennial study found that only 50.7% of those serving in the position intended to remain in the position in 2015 (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011).

Every 10 years the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) conducts large-scale studies involving thousands of superintendents nationwide. The focus of these studies include the demographics of current leaders, working conditions of the superintendency, and superintendent tenure, in addition to national trends and key issues affecting both education

and leadership. The findings of these studies are combined into a publication utilized to inform and advise those associated with the superintendency for years to come.

Age has been a focus of the AASA Decennial Study, which identified an increased average age of the individuals serving as superintendents (Kowalski et al., 2011). In the 2000 Decennial Study, eight percent of the superintendents who responded to the survey were over the age of 60 (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2001). In 2010 the percent of superintendents over age 60 increased to 18.1%. This change, from 2000 to 2010, in the number of superintendents over the age of 60 represents a growth of over 126% in 10 years. The age of these individuals can be perceived as representing a high level of dedication to the students and communities these superintendents serve, but also creates a concern surrounding the number of individuals who will leave these roles in the near future.

Some believe that a superintendent shortage is situational in nature due to the location of the school district (Casserly, Lewis, Uzzell, Horwitz, & Simon, 2014; Copeland, 2013; Wood, Finch, & Mirecki, 2013). Larger urban school districts and small rural school districts are faced with entirely different issues specific to their location and district make-up. Sixty-six of the nation's largest urban school districts support 14% of students grades K-12 but 20% of our nation's low-income students (Casserly et al., 2014). Rural superintendents have the responsibility of serving in five of the major roles that would normally be shared by a school district leadership team: manager, planner, listener, communicator, and community involvement (Copeland, 2013).

Due to the advanced age of the typical superintendent, the location of the district they are serving, and the number of those surveyed who predicted they would soon end their service, factors affecting tenure and number of potential candidates become a topic of interest. One of

those factors is stress (Gmelch & Swent, 1982; Sharp & Walter, 2004). In a time of higher accountability, strained financial resources, and continuous demands of maintaining a solid relationship with the community, superintendents need to monitor the impact of their position on their personal lives and health. Every person currently sitting in the seat of district leadership has a varying definition of the stress they experience, the factors that impact their personal stress experience, and the influence these have on their career. Before delving into these stressors and their influence, a firm understanding of exactly what defines the role of superintendent is needed.

Role of the Superintendent

At the school district level there is a leader and manager titled the superintendent. Within the business world a corporation may have a chief financial officer, a chief executive officer, and/or a chief operating officer. Within school leadership all of those titles are incorporated into the role of superintendent. A superintendent is required to be a generalist with a working knowledge of personnel, finance, facilities, public relations, curriculum, instruction, collective bargaining, assessment, accountability, and other areas (Goens, 2009; Sharp & Walter, 2004). The superintendency may or may not be supported by additional staff members including, but not limited to, assistant superintendent(s), financial manager, curriculum director, assessment director, technology director, buildings and grounds supervisor, and transportation director (Maas & Maas, 2016). It is not difficult to make the connection between larger districts and more administrative personnel. Larger districts have higher student enrollments, which correlates with larger school budgets. Larger school budgets can support more resources, including personnel. In contrast, there are some small districts that are led by one district administrator, the superintendent, who holds all the responsibilities listed above.

Despite those who may support the position, the superintendent is the highest form of leadership in a school district and by design holds the highest level of accountability and decision-making. The position of superintendent has often been described as lonely due to serving in a position that is isolated, with numerous responsibilities, and a limited number of allies and supports (Litchka, Fenzel, & Polka, 2009). The 2010 Decennial Study identified five distinct roles of superintendents: instructional leader, manager, statesman/political leader, applied social scientist, and effective communicator (Kowalski et al., 2011).

The role of superintendent has had many changes since the first one was appointed in the middle of the 19th century (Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2014). At that time, the school districts of America were run solely by school boards. When it became clear that school boards could not maintain the day-to-day administrative responsibilities of the school district, a determination was made that one person, a superintendent, would serve in that role (Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand, & Usdan; 1990). The primary role of the superintendent was to serve as an instructional leader. Since then superintendents have been pushed to become more of a generalist. More emphasis has been placed on curriculum and instruction, planning for the future, involving others in the decision making, improving student achievement, managing fiscal resources, facility and plant management, school law, and building cultural leadership (Myers, 2011; Schwahn & Spady, 1998; Short & Scriber, 2000; Thompson, Wood, & Honeyman, 1994).

The various responsibilities of a superintendent can shift in balance with any unpredictable issue that arises. Losing the focus over time of instructional leader to generalist has put more pressure on the role of superintendent; and in doing so, may have increased the stress level or dissatisfaction experienced by that individual. This stems from a personal concern of poor preparation for the wide range of responsibilities required of today's superintendent

(Myers, 2011). This role definition combined with the concerning percentages of retirement, frame the need for a better understanding of the stress associated with district leadership.

Definition of Stress

Researchers have been studying occupational stress for over 40 years and thus have created multiple definitions; studied various physiological and psychological effects and symptoms; and suggested remedies. Do not mistake challenge for stress.

Challenge energizes us psychologically and physically; it motivates us to learn new skills and master our jobs. When a challenge is met, we feel relaxed and satisfied. Thus, challenge is an important ingredient for healthy and productive work. (Wright, 2007, p. 279)

The most basic definitions of stress state that stress is simply a physical reaction to something that disrupts equilibrium. Stress is a feeling of anxiousness or frustration (Stress, n.d.). There are variations of stress described throughout research (Boyland, 2011; McEwen, 2004; Teixeira et al., 2015). Not all factors causing stress manifest in every person. Further understanding comes from dividing stress into categories of chronic and acute.

Acute stress, defined as a short-lived stress, originates from demands and pressures of the recent past and anticipated demands and pressures of the near future (American Psychological Association, n.d.). Acute stress can be exciting, scary, or an adrenaline rush. Physical responses to acute stress may be increased heart rate, rapid breathing, or increased activity or alertness. Examples of this type of stress are the physical reactions to riding a roller coaster, being startled, or the trauma of wrecking a bicycle. There is very little research on the physiological impact of acute stress. Teixeira et al. (2015) was the first research team to study the relationships of acute stress with impairments to cognitive performance. This research group indicated that their

findings were the first of their kind and will need further research to solidify their results. The specifics of their findings are located in a later section when discussing gender and stress. When individuals speak of stress in their lives, most often that reflection is not in reference to acute stress.

Chronic stress is the stress delineated when referring to pressures in life that make functioning difficult. Examples would include mourning the loss of a loved one, the inability to secure employment over a period of time, or any negative pressure that persists for an extended period of time (APA, n.d.). For the purpose of this study, the focus is chronic stress in the workplace.

Stress related to that experienced at work is referred to as workplace stress or job strain (Wright, 2007). Workplace stress is defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses which are developed based on the magnitude of the demands being made and the individual's sense of control or decision-making latitude in addressing them (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999; Sauter et al., 1999). The factors of workplace stress affecting public school superintendents were clarified with the completion of this research study. This study is an important contribution to the field as this level of stress can build and, in turn, reveal consequences for the individual employed to meet such high level expectations.

Impact of Stress on the Individual

Health care providers are becoming more and more concerned with the health effects associated with chronic stress (Boyland, 2011; McEwen, 2004). There are many physical reactions that come from chronic stress. Some of the more severe instances include heart attack, stroke, anxiety, weakened functioning of the adrenal gland, disrupted sleep, Cushing's syndrome, and depressive symptoms (American Psychological Association, 2016; Larimore, 2003;

McEwen, 2004; Nelson & Burke, 2000; Sheline, 2003; Starkman, Giordani, Gebarski, & Schteingart, 2003; Wright, 2007).

The brain is the central organ of the stress response. It determines what is stressful and what response the body is going to have to the stressor. Once the stress event is registered by the brain, the stress hormone cortisol is released (McEwen, 2008). This hormone ignites the fight or flight response with the intent of increasing the availability of energy for the body to respond to the stress. The body responds by raising the heart rate and blood pressure and heightening awareness. Systems such as the immune system are shut down to redirect the energy to a more necessary bodily function (Lupien, Mahey, Tu, Fiocco, & Schramek, 2007). Ideally the body would respond to the stress, hormone levels would decrease, and the body would go back into equilibrium. With the presence of chronic stress, this equilibrium may not be achieved. When this happens, cortisol levels do not decrease as necessary and instead the body experiences chronic wear and tear (McEwen, 2008). This wear and tear can manifest as the mental and physical health issues listed above and, in some extreme cases, can impact cognitive and verbal memory functioning (Bremner, 1999; Lupien et al., 2007; McEwen, 2008).

Cushing's syndrome is one of the health conditions previously mentioned. This syndrome results from a benign tumor on the pituitary gland resulting in increased levels of cortisol. This disease has symptoms that are often associated with stress but require a different form of medical attention. Depression, obesity, redness of skin, acne, purple stretch marks, irregular menstrual cycles, and lowered libido are all symptoms of Cushing's disease which may be mistaken for stress, anxiety, and burnout (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, 2012).

Depressive symptoms, defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), are those experienced every day for a period of at least two weeks without any proper management (2013). Depressive symptoms are an important health problem because they have been associated with higher levels of suicide yet the individual may not have been labeled with a psychiatric diagnosis of depression. Studies have found a significant positive association between organizational role stress, the stress level impacted by the responsibility and accountability in one's occupational position, and depressive symptoms. Organizational role stress and culture are significantly positively associated with onset of depressive symptoms (Singh, Gupta, Dubey, & Singh, 2016).

Not all symptoms of stress are experienced or can be witnessed by another person. Spaniol and Caputo (1979) developed a detailed, three-tiered description of burnout, similar to the degree levels of a physical burn. Their work stemmed from the understanding of chronic stress, termed burnout, and the need to increase identification for those experiencing burnout and those helping/supporting these individuals. First-degree burnout is defined as a short-lived experience with anxiety, worry, or frustration. Second-degree burnout is more intense. This level of burnout includes mood changes, increasingly negative attitude towards colleagues and profession, as well as restless sleep patterns. The most severe burnout is third-degree. Someone experiencing this level is continually struggling with physical and psychological debilitation compounded by low self-esteem, depression, and withdrawal from others, both professional and personal. Although these three degrees are vastly different, the spectrum of identification and understanding has become clearer. In order to effectively decrease the stress level for an individual, it is necessary to examine factors influencing the experience of stress.

Gender and Stress

In 2000, Nelson and Burke completed a study to understand how stress manifests differently due to gender. Multiple researchers have attempted to better understand whether females or males experience higher levels of stress but have not come to a consistent conclusion (APA, 2016; Burke & Nelson, 2000; Singh, 2014b). Nelson and Burke (2000) explored the impact of gender in connection with stress by studying marketing executives in the banking sector. The importance of their study at that specific time was the growing number of women in leadership roles. When they focused on gender as a variable in their study, the gender make-up of business leadership had changed, therefore changing the participant pool of the study. In 2000, 11.9% of the officer positions (chief executive, chief operating, or chief financial) in Fortune 500 companies were held by women. This is an increase from 8.2% in 1995. Singh's 2014b research validated the findings of Nelson and Burke (2000) and went on to clarify the gender divide by examining how each gender experienced different triggers of stress and required different approaches to coping with this stress.

The highest stress factors impacting women center around interpersonal conflict, social life, lack of job autonomy, and job strain (Connerley & Wu, 2016). Women often struggle with conflict between their role expectations at work and their responsibilities at home. There are three major sources from which these conflicts arise: society at large, organizations, and women themselves (Richardsen et al., 2016). Women report experiencing stress as headaches, poor physical health, anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances. Women's rate of depression is twice that of men. Addictions increase as a result of women experiencing chronic stress. Smoking, alcohol, and eating disorders are the most common behavioral responses to stress (Nelson & Burke, 2000).

When determining the number one cause of women's stress in the workplace, research revealed the cause to be interpersonal conflicts (Connerley & Wu, 2016). Evidence supports that women experience physical symptoms as a result of stress. Although women's responses to stress are individual, Teixeira et al. (2015) found that females who were introduced to an acute stressor while participating in the Stroop Color-Word Test presented fewer cognitive losses than men. The acute stressor within this assessment included 112 printed color names (red, green, blue, yellow) arranged in four columns of 28 names each. The color names are printed in one of four different colors, but never the color of the written word. Participants are asked to identify the color in which the word was printed, not the color word. They need to do so as quickly and accurately as possible as the results are measured in seconds. After collecting the data surrounding this acute stressor, it became clear that females experienced fewer cognitive losses than their male counterparts. These findings may be applicable due to the fact that men have a different experience when processing stress in the workplace.

The highest triggers of stress for men are workload, financial stressors, and work mistakes (Richardson, Traavik, & Burke 2016). Men tend to respond to stress in physical manners including cardiovascular disease and other lifestyle diseases including heart disease, strokes, back pain, gastrointestinal issues, headaches, and cancer (Hargrove, Quick, Nelson, & Quick, 2011; Robinson & Shakeshaft, 2016). Gender is just one factor when attempting to understand stress in leadership.

Work Tenure and Stress

Research has connected superintendent position tenure and student achievement in multiple studies (Byrd, Drews, & Johnson, 2006; Myers, 2011; Simpson, 2013; Waters and Marzano, 2009), revealing that the longer a superintendent is in place the higher the achievement

of the students in that district. A 2013 study identified that students demonstrated significant growth in achievement scores when superintendents served more than five years in the same school district (Simpson, 2013). In 2014, the Council of Great City Schools reported the average tenure of an urban superintendent to be slightly over three years. There is potential for increased student success solely based on the length of time a superintendent serves in one district. If stress is an influence on a superintendent's tenure, there is a need for it to be identified and remedied.

Waters and Marzano (2009) approached student achievement from both the perspective of a superintendent's effectiveness as well as tenure in the position. Their studies revealed that superintendents performing at the 50th percentile in terms of leadership skills have a positive impact of 9.5 percentile points for student achievement. In addition, their findings indicated that longevity in the position also had a positive effect (.19 significant at the .05 level) on student achievement in as little as two years into the superintendent's tenure.

At this time there is a lack of research to connect stress levels with work tenure in the superintendent's position. A hypothesis can be proposed that urban districts are equated to higher needs, which may lead to higher stress levels and shorter tenures in the superintendent's position. In order to respond to that hypothesis, this research study analyzed the demographic factors of work tenure and district location to explore this relationship

Location of District Leadership

Prior research has identified that the location of the school district has an effect on the challenges faced by the superintendent. In a study of public school superintendents in Texas, it was found that student-related challenges such as diversity and discipline issues were varied depending on the location of the school district (Trevino, Braley, Brown, & Slate, 2008).

Superintendents of rural schools experienced less concerns surrounding student-related challenges than their counterparts in suburban and urban districts. Rural was the only outlier as suburban and urban districts did not differ from each other. In the fall 2014 Eighth Survey and Report by the Council of the Great City Schools, it was stated that urban school superintendents face a greater set of challenges than their counterparts throughout the nation. “Urban school administrators hold one of the most important and challenging jobs in America’s education system” (Casserly et al., 2014, p. 1). In 2006, Buchanan described the urban school superintendent’s stress as a regular experience of academic, funding, and socio-economic challenges. He went on to state that superintendents are often subjected to the pressures of the school boards, who often times find it easier to “change the coach than to change the players” (p. 210).

A Closer Look at Stressors

Anyone who has been, currently holds, or is taking steps to become a superintendent is under no illusion about stress being part of the job. Stress and the superintendency go hand in hand. The definitions of stress at the level of superintendent is as individualized and unique as each person who serves in the position. The stressors associated with the position of superintendents are found to be similar to the stress and strain experienced by corporate executives (Smith, 2001).

The superintendency is a balance of proactive and reactive decisions based on the unique quandary of the day. Superintendents must be prepared, on a daily basis, to effectively address the countless issues which require a variety of leadership skills (Myers, 2011). As Rammer (2007) directly states “Public school superintendents ultimately are responsible for the success or failure of the schools within their district” (p. 67). Because of this increasing pressure from a

variety of directions and in a variety of roles in the job description, it appears that the stress levels of superintendents may be rising over time. The reported percentage of superintendents experiencing very great stress and considerable stress has increased from 43.6% in 1980 to 59.2% in 2006 (Glass & Franceschini, 2007).

Robinson and Shakeshaft (2016) conducted a national study of school superintendents in an effort to connect stress and health in district leadership. The results of the study found 11 stressors in which the superintendents reported moderate to extreme stress. These stressors were divided into three factors: time required by the job, overall changing state and federal regulations/group demands, and inadequate school finance. The physical manifestations of this stress included high cholesterol, high blood pressure, obesity, gastrointestinal problems, insomnia, anxiety, sleep apnea, and chronic headaches. The connection between stress and health issues was very clear in the research conducted.

In the following paragraphs, I will discuss in more detail the three key “stress areas” for superintendents as identified by Robinson and Shakeshaft (2016). These areas are time demands, policy impacts, and financial challenges.

Time Demands of the Superintendency

The time required of a superintendent is enough to cause careful contemplation for potential candidates prior to the final decision to serve. Superintendents are often required to be on call 24 hours a day. Sharp and Walter (2004) made efforts to clearly explain the various time requirements. Attending sporting events, dances, club events, concerts, community events, civic organizations, regional and state meetings, and other superintendent meetings within their immediate physical area only scratch the surface in defining the roles and responsibilities of the position. This list does not include the necessary time in the office, the hundreds of emails

needing addressed, or the appointments scheduled for parents, teachers, school board members, community members, and building administrators.

The American School Superintendent 2010 Decennial Study identified that 63% of superintendents spend six hours or less each week solely communicating with members of the school board. This does not include any of the additional areas requiring time dedication. A 2003 study not only identified the role of superintendent as labor intensive, but quantified it as often requiring 80 or more hours a week (Colorado Association of School Executives). A superintendent could very easily become consumed with the role, upset the work-life balance, and allow the demands of the job to take priority over personal goals, family, and personal interests.

Policy Impact on the Superintendent

The information included in this section is an overview of educational policy and its transition through time. The expectation in this section is to view the development of educational policy from the seat of the superintendent, the person who is most accountable in the district.

Educational policy has come a long way since the Coleman Report in 1966. The educational system has transitioned from student background as an indication of student success to state accountability of each individual student's proficiency on standardized testing as a requirement for graduation (Coleman et al., 1966; No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002)

To start we must recognize that the United States of America broadly supports the utilization of standardized achievement tests as a strategy to improve student performance and public education as a whole (Hamilton, Stecher, & Klein, 2002; Hart & Teeter, 2004). The

following information highlights the timeline of policy transition and the impact on public school superintendents.

In 1983 “A Nation at Risk” brought failing schools into public awareness as well as requirements for reform. Superintendents were identified as crucial in developing school and community support for the required reforms including tracking per-pupil expenditures, teacher salaries, class sizes, and utilizing standardized testing as a means of school and district accountability (Gardner, 1983; Supovitz, 2009).

Next came NCLB in 2002. This law took accountability to the highest level educational leadership had seen, requiring 100 percent of students to be proficient in English, mathematics, and science by 2014. Achievement was defined as proficiency and growth, and teachers were required to be highly qualified. Superintendents were not only tasked to serve as instructional leaders, but also as liaisons between state and local political parties.

Race to the Top (2012) appeared to provide relief from No Child Left Behind by approving waivers from the high proficiency expectations, yet it added Common Core Standards, vouchers for public school students to attend nonpublic institutions, and teacher evaluations to be directly connected to student assessment results. The competitive nature of this initiative increased accountability, public transparency, and school competition to the highest level the country had seen (Odden & Picus, 2014).

When reflecting on this timeline of policy from the seat of superintendent, the expectations continued to rise while the support structure, accountabilities, and targets continued to move. The expectation of staying current, meeting the ever-changing policy requirements, holding teachers accountable, and assisting the community in understanding the what and why of educational policy is just as much a stressor in successful times as it is in unsuccessful times.

School Finance

School finance is the third factor identified by Robinson and Shakeshaft (2016) as a source of high stress for superintendents. Within the realm of school finance, districts are constantly challenged to do more with less. Currently 25 states within the United States are providing less “general” funding, the primary form of state funding for schools, per student than in 2008. In seven of these states, the cuts exceeded 10 percent (Leachman, Ablares, Masterson, & Wallace, 2016). Budget restraints are a real and consistent concern for district leaders (Bjork et al., 2014; Litchka et al., 2009; Robinson & Shakeshaft, 2016; Wells, 2013a). Requirements of general funds versus capital funds, regulations for the usage of funds, state versus federal dollars, and effective use of taxpayer dollars are all pieces of school finance that superintendents need to know, understand, and be able to discuss. The issue is compounded by the ever-changing budget formula and explains why school finance is typically a full-time job for someone serving beneath the superintendent.

Dr. Walter Gmelch

In chapter one, Dr. Walter Gmelch and Dr. Boyd Swent were introduced as the authors of the Administrative Stress Index (1982). The development of this index comes from in-depth research in understanding stress experiences and the desire to understand the events that cause a person to travel through the process of coping with stress.

Dr. Gmelch’s research began with his book titled *Beyond Stress to Effective Management* (1982), where he defined a four-stage stress process: demand on the individual, reception of the demand, immediate reaction to the demand, and consequences. Consequences are defined differently than immediate reaction because they include longer-range effects (1982). An example of this process deepens the understanding of where Dr. Gmelch started. A

superintendent receives a phone call from a parent stating that her child is being wrongfully expelled. This creates a demand on the superintendent. If the superintendent determines this event is not stressful, the cycle ends. If the event registers as stressful, even unconsciously, the superintendent must determine how to respond to the stress. The response may manifest physiologically or psychologically. The coping strategy chosen is pulled from past experience, training, or available resources. The superintendent responds to the parent, yet even after the event is over, consequences may occur. The severity of consequences due to this event is determined by the superintendent's ability to cope. The next step after developing these four stages was to better understand the events causing stress.

The Administrative Stress Index started with the fifteen-item index titled Job-Related Strain, developed by Indik, Seashore, and Slesinger (1964). The focus of this tool was occupational stress in general. Due to the desire to better understand stress in educational leadership, Gmelch and Swent required additional components. Added to the Job-Related Strain were suggested items from a review of research for public school administrators and stress logs kept by forty school administrators. Each log, collected over a one-week period, required these individuals to document the most stressful single incident that day and the most stressful series of related incidents. At the conclusion of the reflection period, each participant was asked to identify any additional sources of stress that may not have been previously included during the week. Twenty-three items resulted from these efforts, which were identified as specific stressors experienced by public school administrators.

The identified stressors were categorized in the five factors introduced in chapter one: administrative constraints (those connected to inadequate time, number of meetings, and required procedures), administrative responsibilities (evaluations, negotiations, and supervision),

interpersonal relations (resolving differences), intrapersonal conflict (the struggle between one's performance and personal values), and role expectations (the difference in personal expectations and expectations by those he or she serves). Each stress factor has a cluster of seven associated stressors. The final 35-item Administrative Stress Index was designed (See Appendix A). Once the index had been field tested for validity and clarity, revised and then tested again, the Administrative Stress Index was utilized on a larger scale to gather stress data from 1,156 school administrators in the state of Oregon (1982). The administrators included in this sample consisted of elementary, middle, and high school principals, assistant superintendents, central office staff, curriculum, athletic, and transportation directors, and superintendents.

Dr. Gmelch recognized the overwhelming amount of information that needed to be collected and analyzed regarding stress and coping strategies within educational leadership. "No amount of research can provide the single answer for all administrators. A crucial step, none-the-less, is to make the sources of stress visible and identify effective ways of coping with these pressures" (1982, p. 16).

Summary

In summary there are many stressors, divided into key factors, which equate to large amounts of stress for superintendents. Individuals who willingly accept and dedicate themselves to this position encounter and experience stress from multiple sources. Whether stress is acute or chronic, positive or negative, professional or personal, these varieties all fall under the umbrella of stress. More information needs to be collected and analyzed regarding the stress experienced by public school superintendents.

In order to retain district-level leaders, support their efforts toward personal health, and cement their dedication to the profession, more study is necessary to identify what stress factors

have the most impact on today's superintendent. In investigating the three research questions asked in this study, progress can be made towards understanding stress in the superintendency, which may ultimately encourage retention of current superintendents and recruitment of future superintendent candidates.

CHAPTER 3

Method

The purpose of this chapter is to clearly describe the sequence of actions that took place in order to gather, verify, and prepare valid data. These data were analyzed and results are shared in the next chapter. The purpose of this study was to better understand the factors of stress reported by Indiana public school superintendents and to investigate which of those factors may create the most strain on these individuals. This information was gathered in hopes of heightening understanding of stress in the superintendency, which may lead to improved strategies for increasing superintendent tenure, personal awareness of their stress levels, and may potentially advise hiring committees and school boards in their attempt to secure and retain effective superintendents.

Research Questions

1. What issues and responsibilities do public school superintendents perceive to be stressful?
2. How do the variables of gender, age, total years in current position, total years as a superintendent, race/ethnicity, approximate percentage of minority students, approximate percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced status, and location of the school district (urban, suburban, rural) impact perceived stress?
3. What coping strategies do public school superintendents identify as ways they cope with stress?

Research Design

This research is identified as a quantitative study. Data was analyzed to look at relationships between naturally occurring variables identified as dependent (stress) and

independent (age, gender, district location, and tenure in current position). The design was a one-time survey in which data was collected from a common population identified in the next section.

Population and Sample

The state of Indiana contains 293 public school corporations. Each of these districts is led by one school superintendent. There may or may not be additional district leadership in the administration team, but the role of superintendent is held by one individual per school corporation or district. The participant pool of this study consisted solely of Indiana public school superintendents. The email contact list of superintendents was obtained from the Indiana Department of Education's (IDOE) website, which is public information, and includes every public school superintendent in the state ($n = 293$). Assistant superintendents or other central office personnel were not included.

The invitation to participate was sent via email and the survey link to Qualtrics was provided in the email. Superintendents were assured that participation in this study was voluntary and that their anonymity would be retained. Participants of this study were also informed that their participation would assist in identifying and clarifying stressors experienced in the role as superintendent within the state of Indiana.

Instrumentation

The tool utilized in this study was Dr. Walter Gmelch's and Dr. Boyd Swent's (1982) measure titled the Administrative Stress Index (ASI) (Appendix A). The ASI instrument was chosen for this study because it is an appropriate research match and also because of the high reliability and validity of the instrument. This index was previously developed and validated as a measure of perceived job-related stress of school administrators, both building and district. The

ASI was designed to determine the levels of stress experienced by superintendents and school administrators, the most common triggers of stress, and coping strategies utilized to manage that stress.

This instrument consists of 35 items divided into five factors: administrative constraints, administrative responsibility, interpersonal relations, intrapersonal conflict, and role expectations. Each of the 35 statements required the individual participant to respond using a three-point Likert Scale of frequency: rarely or never bothers me (coded 1), occasionally bothers me (coded 2), and frequently bothers me (coded 3). The survey also included eight additional items to collect the following demographic data: gender, age, total years in current position, total years as a superintendent, race/ethnicity, approximate percentage of minority students, approximate percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced status, and location of the school district (urban, suburban, rural). Two additional open-ended items were included at the end of the ASI that asked superintendents to share what they find to be most stressful in their job as well as provide any coping strategies that they have found helpful in managing their job stress.

The index was administered electronically via a link embedded in an email (Appendix B). The optimal time necessary to complete the index was between five and seven minutes. Participation was completely anonymous. This intentional decision was made in hopes of achieving a higher response rate.

The index was deployed in the middle of June 2017 via an email including the purpose of the study, directions for completion, and gratitude for the time committed for completion. The email was an invitation to participate with a link that took the superintendent to an informed consent agreement and then the survey. One week later, a follow-up email was sent to all superintendents again asking for their participation and thanking those who had already

participated. One week after that, a final follow-up email was sent to all superintendents, thanking them for their participation and providing the link one last time for any who still wanted to participate. The superintendents received a total of three emails over a three-week period.

Data Collection Procedures

Responses were collected electronically through an online survey software, Qualtrics. The anonymous response function in Qualtrics was utilized. Because of this there was no method of linking subjects with their response data at any time. The utilization of Qualtrics allowed for manipulation and synthesis of the data while considering the variables of the study. An additional benefit of this electronic resource is the ability to store the data until the survey timeline was closed and data analysis began.

Statistical Analysis Procedures

Data analyses were completed using a quantitative statistics software, SPSS. Any incomplete survey data was evaluated to determine if the information was valid or warranted removal from the study. A mean of each of the five factors was calculated and a standard deviation identified. Using the mean of the 35 index items, the factors were ranked in order from most to least stressful. Descriptive statistics were presented to provide an overall picture of the results. Then, inferential analyses were conducted. An analysis of variance was completed to identify any significance between the independent variables: gender, age, total years in current position, total years as a superintendent, race/ethnicity, approximate percentage of minority students, approximate percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced status, and location of the school district (urban, suburban, rural), and the dependent variable of stress. The means of the five ASI factors (administrative constraints, administrative responsibility, interpersonal relations, intrapersonal conflict, and role expectations) were identified and assessed for statistical

significance in relation with the eight independent variables. The analysis of covariance was utilized to better identify significance for the continuous variables of age, total years in current position, total years as a superintendent, approximate percentage of minority students, and approximate percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced status. For any statistically significant relationships identified, appropriate post hoc analyses were employed. Post hoc results with statistical significance helped identify factors or conditions that superintendents perceive contribute to their levels of stress. These calculations will be discussed in the next chapter as the results are shared and significance is determined.

The final items of inquiry, which collected information regarding what the superintendents find to be most stressful along with the coping strategies Indiana public school superintendents employ to combat the stressors they experience from their leadership role, were compiled. The responses collected via these open-ended response opportunities were analyzed by frequency of response. These responses were tallied and reported verbatim corresponding with the number of responses for each strategy.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was the publication date of the Administrative Stress Index (1982). Although there have been many changes in education since 1982, such as increased efforts for school safety, continued updating of technology, and the increased presence of social media, the index is still extremely applicable and relevant today. The five factors, consisting of 35 index responses are general enough to encompass current issues, yet specific enough to provide insight into the categories of service the superintendent identified as most stressful.

The Administrative Stress Index (1982) is also limited in its categories of responses. Rating categories of “rarely bothers me,” “occasionally bothers me,” and “frequently bothers

me,” are subjective statements that may not be interpreted the same by every respondent. A suggestion for future use would be to expand upon these responses to include a frequency guideline for superintendent use while measuring their experience of stress. An example of this would be “rarely bothers me: I experience this stressor once a month” or “frequently bothers me: I experience this stressor 2-3 times per week.” This guidance may increase the authenticity and comparability of responses amongst public school superintendents.

Another limitation to this research was in the participation. This study was voluntary, which may have limited the number of responses. This is because superintendents are very busy individuals and the time-demands of the position may have inhibited them from taking the time to participate.

A third limitation was that this study was limited to public school superintendents in the state of Indiana. This was identified as a limitation because it inhibits generalizability to the larger population of U.S. superintendents.

The final limitation identified comes from the methods of the research. This study was solely quantitative by design and did not allow for additional qualitative insights, which may have added richer context into understanding the stress experienced by Indiana public school superintendents.

CHAPTER 4

Results

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to better understand the factors of stress reported by Indiana public school superintendents and to investigate which of those factors may create the most strain on those individuals. This information was gathered in hopes of heightening understanding of stress in the superintendency, which may lead to strategies for increasing superintendent tenure, personal awareness, and potentially advise hiring committees and school boards in their attempts to secure and retain effective superintendents. This study specifically addressed the following research questions:

1. What job issues and responsibilities do public school superintendents perceive to be stressful?
2. How do the variables of gender, age, total years in current position, total years as a superintendent, race/ethnicity, approximate percentage of minority students, approximate percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced status, and location of the school district (urban, suburban, rural) impact perceived stress?
3. What coping strategies do public school superintendents identify as successful in managing job stress?

Data for this study came directly from the survey results. At the time of this study, a total of 184 Indiana public school superintendents responded to the survey, out of a possible 287 active superintendents in the state. This equates to a 64% response rate. Although the survey data were collected utilizing the anonymous response function in Qualtrics, all survey results were entered into a spreadsheet and reported in a combined format as an additional measure to protect respondents' confidentiality.

The results are analyzed in this chapter beginning with a description of the participants utilizing demographic data collected through the survey process. These demographic descriptors will be followed by research findings for each of the three research questions.

Demographics

Demographic data were collected for each participant. The demographic portion of the survey included eight independent variables: gender, age, race/ethnicity, total years in current position, total years as a superintendent, approximate percentage of minority students, approximate percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced status, and location of the school district. These independent variables allowed for better understanding of the sample in order to further the understanding of the survey results. For reporting purposes, these eight independent variables were divided into three categories: demographic variables, years of superintendent service, and school district demographics. Tables 1, 2, and 3, respectively, share the results of descriptive analyses including percentages and frequencies for each of the independent variables.

This pool of respondents included superintendents currently serving public school districts in the state of Indiana. There were 184 participants (81.4% male, 17.5% female). The participant group of this study closely mirrored the gender make-up those serving as public school superintendents at the time (80.9% male, 19.1% female). The ages of the participants were widely distributed from 33 to 70 years with the largest percentage (42.6%) between the ages of 46 and 55. The average age of the participants was 53.86 years. The majority (96.7%) were Caucasian; other races included Black (0.5%), Hispanic (0.5%), and Multiracial (1.1%). These results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Variables for All Participants

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Female	32	17.5
Male	149	81.4
No Answer	2	1.1
Age		
<41	7	3.8
41-45	21	11.5
46-50	41	22.4
51-55	37	20.2
56-60	36	19.7
61-65	30	16.4
>65	10	5.5
No Answer	1	0.5
Race		
Black	1	0.5
Hispanic/Latino	1	0.5
Multiracial	2	1.1
White	177	96.7
Prefer Not to Say	2	1.1

The total time the participants have worked as a superintendent in Indiana ranged between one-half of a school year to 20 years, with most (48.6%) having served less than six years. In analyzing the number of years the participants had served in their current position, the majority (65.6%) of Indiana public school superintendents had served less than six years. The longest any individual had served in his or her current position as superintendent was 20 years. Demographic data relating to the longevity of superintendent service are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Years of Superintendent Service

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Years in Current Position		
<6	120	65.6
6-10	41	22.4
11-15	12	6.6
16-20	10	5.5
>20	0	0.0
Total Years as a Superintendent		
<6	89	48.6
6-10	54	29.5
11-15	20	10.9
16-20	14	7.7
>20	5	2.7
NA	1	0.5

School district demographics were collected with the hope of better understanding and identifying any relationships between these factors and the stress experienced by the superintendents who served the included school districts. The school district location descriptors included rural (73.2%), suburban (17.5%), and urban (8.7%). Of the school districts represented, the majority (55.7%) had a percentage of minority students totaling less than six percent. The range of reported students qualifying for free/reduced lunch and textbook assistance was more evenly distributed as seen in Table 3, with most schools ($n = 52$) reporting between 41 and 50% of students accessing financial assistance for both meals and textbooks.

Table 3

School District Demographics

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
School Community		
Rural	134	73.2
Suburban	32	17.5
Urban	16	8.7
No Answer	1	0.5
Percent Minority Students		
≤1	24	13.1
2-5	78	42.6
6-10	25	13.7
11-15	14	7.7
16-20	9	4.9
21-25	10	5.5
26-30	5	2.7
31-35	2	1.1
36-40	3	1.6
≥41	11	6.0
No Answer	2	1.1
Percent Free/Reduced		
≤10	1	0.5
11-20	8	4.4
21-30	25	13.7
31-40	39	21.3
41-50	52	28.4
51-60	34	18.6
≥61	24	13.1

In most scenarios, it was observed that the demographics of the schools and communities presented an accurate picture of Indiana in terms of typical population distributions and characteristics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Indiana consists primarily of rural and suburban settlements, with only 16 areas considered large urban (Indiana State Government, 2016).

Per the Indiana Department of Education (2017), the statewide average of students qualifying for free or reduced meals was 45.7% (our study found 45.2%). The only discrepancy in characteristics of this study was found in the representation of race and ethnicity. The state percentage of non-white students is 29.4%, while our study included only 11.3%. Therefore, while not perfect, portions of the demographic data gathered in our study were considered appropriately representative of the characteristics of the state's student population.

Understanding the distributions of independent variables associated with the participants was necessary in order to analyze and interpret the stress data with validity. The next portion of this chapter utilized the demographic information to address the research questions individually and the results associated with them.

Research Question 1

The purpose of research question one was to identify what job issues and responsibilities Indiana public school superintendents perceived to be most stressful. This question was answered in two parts: the completion of the Administrative Stress Index and an open-ended response item at the end of the survey requesting that participants share the most stressful job factor impacting them at the time of the survey.

Each of the Indiana public school superintendents included in this study responded to the 35 stressors included in the ASI by reflecting on the influence those stressors had on their success as an individual. The response options, and their point values, included with each of the stressors were "rarely bothers me" (1), "occasionally bothers me" (2), and "frequently bothers me" (3). Using the responses of these superintendents, both a mean and standard deviation were calculated for each of the 35 stressors. The results of these stressors were then organized by the five stress factors established by Dr. Gmelch (1982). These factors included administrative

constraints, administrative responsibilities, interpersonal relations, intrapersonal conflicts, and role expectations. The first step taken to analyze these data was to better understand the 35 individual stressors.

The highest stressor identified by Indiana public school superintendents was “Complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies” ($M = 2.20$, $SD = .684$). Sixty-five (35.5%) participants stated that this stressor frequently bothered them. The second highest stressor identified by Indiana public school superintendents was “Imposing excessively high expectations on myself” ($M = 2.09$, $SD = .707$). Thirty percent ($n = 54$) identified that the self-inflicted high expectations were a frequent bother to themselves.

The results of the ASI can be organized to better understand the order, highest to lowest, of influence the 35 stressors had on Indiana’s public school superintendents. The top 10 stressors are included in Table 4, and the rank of all 35 stressors along with their item numbers, means, standard deviations, and response percentages can be found in Appendix D. Further analyses of these 35 stressors is included in the next section where the focus changes from individual stressors to the five factors of stress associated with the ASI.

Table 4

Top 10 Stressors Identified by Indiana Public School Superintendents

Stressor	Percentage by Response			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently		
Complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies	14.8	49.7	35.5	2.2	0.68
Imposing excessively high expectations on myself	21.1	48.9	30.0	2.09	0.71
Having to make decisions that affect the lives of individual people that I know (colleagues, staff members, students, etc.)	27.8	56.7	15.6	1.89	0.65
Preparing and allocating budget resources	32.2	46.7	21.1	1.88	0.72
Trying to gain public approval and/or financial support for school programs	32.8	49.4	17.8	1.85	0.70
Feeling that I have too heavy a work load, one that I cannot possibly finish during the normal work day	42.8	33.3	23.9	1.82	0.80
Feeling I have to participate in school activities outside of the normal working hours at the expense of my personal time	35.6	48.9	15.6	1.81	0.74
Feeling that meetings take up too much time	38.9	41.7	19.4	1.81	0.69
Thinking that I will not be able to satisfy the conflicting demands of those who have authority over me	41.1	37.2	21.7	1.8	0.77
Being interrupted frequently by telephone calls and email	32.2	57.8	10.0	1.79	0.62

Results analyzed through five factors. The 35 stressors included in the ASI are grouped into five factors: administrative constraints, intrapersonal conflicts, administrative responsibilities, role expectations, and interpersonal relations. Although the majority of stressors fell below a mean of 2.0 ($n = 33$), identified as “occasionally bothers me,” the results have been provided in an effort to understand the rank of each stressor in the relative continuum of most bothersome to least bothersome. In the following analyses, the five factors are introduced in

order from highest to lowest perceived stress. Means and standard deviations for all five of the stress factors can be found in Table 5.

Table 5

Stress Factor Likert Scales: Highest to Lowest

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Administrative Constraints	1.76	0.43
Intrapersonal Conflicts	1.61	0.36
Administrative Responsibilities	1.60	0.40
Role Expectations	1.50	0.41
Interpersonal Relations	1.48	0.35

Administrative constraints are those connected to inadequate time, number of meetings, and required procedures. This factor ($M = 1.76$, $SD = 0.43$) accounted for four of the top-ten individual stressors identified in Table 4, including the highest rated of the 35 stressors, “Complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies” ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 0.68$). This stressor is one of two with a mean greater than two. Eighty-six (49.7%) superintendents identified this stressor as occasionally bothering them, and 61 (35.3%) identified this stressor as frequently bothering them. The other stressors within the top 10 that were associated with administrative constraints include number six, “Feeling that I have too heavy a work load, one that I cannot possibly finish during the normal work day” ($M = 1.82$, $SD = 0.80$), number seven “Feeling that meetings take up too much time” ($M = 1.81$, $SD = 0.69$), and number 10 “Being interrupted frequently by telephone calls and email” ($M = 1.79$, $SD = 0.62$). Although the mean of the last stressor was 1.79, it was noteworthy that 18 of the participants of this study marked a response of three on this item, indicating that being interrupted frequently by telephone calls and emails frequently bothered them.

Two of the top 10 stressors fell into the category of intrapersonal conflicts. Number two “Imposing excessively high expectations on myself” ($M = 2.09$, $SD = 0.71$) and number three “Having to make decisions that affect the lives of individual people that I know” ($M = 1.89$, $SD = 0.65$) were two of the highest ranked stressors Indiana public school superintendents identified on the survey. “Imposing excessively high expectations on myself” was the only other stressor to exceed a mean of 2.0. Forty-nine percent ($n = 85$) of participants identified this stressor to occasionally bother them; in addition 30% ($n = 52$) found this stressor to frequently bother them. Intrapersonal conflicts are connected to the struggle between one’s performance and personal values. This factor can include “Feeling that progress on the job is not what it should be” ($M = 1.59$, $SD = 0.69$), feeling the pressure in “Meeting social expectations including housing, friends, and lifestyles” ($M = 1.54$, $SD = 0.60$), or the feeling of “Having too little authority to carry out the responsibilities assigned to me” ($M = 1.36$, $SD = 0.68$). A large portion ($n = 130$, 75%) of Indiana public school superintendents identified “Having too little authority to carry out the responsibilities assigned to me” as rarely bothering them. The final statistic is noteworthy as the results analyzed in the next section seemed to contradict the ratings of the superintendents on this particular ASI stressor.

The third highest stress factor identified in the ASI is administrative responsibilities ($M = 1.60$, $SD = 0.40$). Administrative responsibilities are those associated with the superintendent as a manager. Two of the top 10 stressors that influenced those surveyed fell into the category of administrative responsibilities. “Preparing and allocating budget resources” ($M = 1.88$, $SD = 0.72$) ranked fourth; and “Trying to gain public approval and/or financial support for school programs” ($M = 1.85$, $SD = 0.70$) ranked fifth. Those survey items were the top two stressors included in this stress factor. “Preparing and allocating budget resources” was not only the

fourth highest individual stressor identified on the ASI, but on the open-ended response item discussed below, the third highest rated theme of stress was “school finance,” mentioned by 18.5% of respondents. Following the eleventh highest overall stressor “Being involved in the collective bargaining process” ($M = 1.70$, $SD = 0.72$), the other four stressors in the factor fell at number 21 and lower. Only 15.6% ($n = 27$) found the collective bargaining process to be frequently bothersome. Evaluations, collective bargaining, and supervision made administrative responsibilities the third highest stress factor experienced by Indiana public school superintendents.

The stress factor titled role expectations ($M = 1.50$, $SD = 0.41$) included stressors caused by the difference in personal expectations and the expectations established by those the superintendent serves. This stress factor is associated with feelings that the superintendent imposes on him or herself. Examples of these stressors include “Feeling the need to participate in activities outside of the work day” ($M = 1.81$, $SD = 0.74$), “Worrying that I will not be able to meet the demands of the role” ($M = 1.80$, $SD = 0.77$), and “Feeling pressures for a better job performance over and above what I think is reasonable” ($M = 1.66$, $SD = 0.74$). The Indiana public school superintendents rated these three stressors low. Superintendents reported that “Feeling the need to participate in activities outside of the work day” occasionally bothered them (42.2%) or rarely bothered them (38.7%). This is the highest ranking stressor in the stress factor titled role expectations. Forty-one percent of superintendents identified “worrying that I will not be able to meet the demands of the role” to rarely bother them. Is this because these stressors are understood to be part of the role?

Finally, Indiana public school superintendents identified interpersonal relations to be the factor that produced the least amount of stress ($M = 1.48$, $SD = 0.35$). Although stress was

evident, the stressors included with this factor were largely rated as “rarely bothers me,” which was the lowest rating a superintendent could select. This does not mean stress was not evident when the seven stressors associated with this factor were analyzed, but rather there was a lower mean relative to the other four factors. Five of the seven stressors associated with this factor are centered on conflict resolution among parents, schools, staff members, school board members, or a combination of those four groups. Talking with others is a known portion of the position. A superintendent’s ability to effectively communicate may potentially expedite the steps to a solution or help avoid some conflicts from arising at all. As stated at the beginning of this section, 33 of the stressors fell below the rating of “occasionally bothers me.”

For future understanding of these findings, it is important to note two stressors in the stress factor interpersonal relations. Indiana public school superintendents were asked to rate two stressors associated with school boards. “Trying to resolve differences with my superior” ($M = 1.54$, $SD = 0.70$) and “Trying to influence my immediate supervisor’s actions and decisions that affect me” ($M = 1.51$, $SD = 0.72$) both had over 100 participants respond that these stressors “rarely bother me.” This is a response rate of 59.5% and 62.4% respectively. The analyses of open-ended responses furthered understanding of the stressors identified by Indiana public school superintendents.

Open-ended Responses

In order to increase understanding of the stressors most influencing Indiana public school superintendents, an open-ended response item was included at the end of the survey. This narrative response item requested that participants identify the occupational factor found to be most stressful in their role as a public school superintendent.

Open-ended responses were organized by theme. For example, the response of "Lack of understanding from my School Board" was categorized under the theme of "School Board Relationships." Any response that contained more than one item was divided into multiple responses and categorized by the different components of that response. For instance, if a superintendent identified both school board frustrations and staff conflicts as causing high stress, the response would be divided into two pieces of data: first, school board frustrations and second, staff conflicts. These data were then added to the appropriate themes and counted as two responses. This method allowed for interpretation of all stressors and a more accurate comparison of the frequencies of each theme. For a complete listing of superintendents' responses on this open-ended question, please see Appendix F.

Of the 195 responses, 179 (91.8%) were associated with five common themes: school board relationships, task overload, school finance, politics, and staff/personnel issues (See Table 6).

Table 6

Open-ended Responses: What do you find most stressful in your job?

Category	<i>n=195</i>	%
School Board Relationships	51	26.2
Task Overload	48	24.6
School Finance	33	16.9
Politics	27	13.8
Staff/Personnel Issues	20	10.3

The majority of superintendents who responded to the open-ended question reported that the pressures of school board relationships caused them to experience the most stress (26.2%). Multiple comments included increased stress caused by school board members who did not understand their roles, those who had a significant lack of understanding regarding the functions of a public school district, and attempting to find the balance of personalities and personal

agendas of elected school board members. For example, one superintendent reported, “There is no way to overcome the biases of certain Board members who supplant my long-serving knowledge and judgment in the situations of this realm for their own. This is the single most demotivating aspect of my job.” This is interesting as the findings on the ASI reported 75.1% ($n = 130$) of Indiana’s public school superintendents found the stressor “Feeling that I have too little authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to me” rarely bothered them.

The second-highest theme of responses was task overload (24.6%). For this study, task overload was defined as too much to accomplish for the time allotted. As previously stated there are similarities in these open-ended responses and those categorized as role expectations within the ASI. Responses to this open-ended question referred to the many hats required in the position, the length of time required beyond a typical work week, and the deadlines associated with the tasks at hand. Specifically mentioned within the open-ended response portion were the difficulties of balancing the role with a small district administration team. Twelve of 48 superintendents’ responses indicated there were only one or two people in their district administrative team. These responses referred to the struggle of being a superintendent in a small school district. One respondent shared his perspective and experience of pressure associated with a small school district.

As the superintendent of a small school district I am the superintendent, business manager, director of transportation, and pretty much jack of all trades. It is difficult, at times, to determine what is most important/which fire to put out first.

While every individual in all varieties of occupations potentially experiences task overload at some point, 48 of 195 (24.6%) responses referenced the growing list of

responsibilities required within the role of Indiana public school superintendent. One superintendent summarized the pressure by saying, “The work is never done. It seems impossible to be an educational leader, a financial leader, and a community leader at the same time.”

The similarity of results between the ASI factor role expectations and the open-ended response theme of task overload are worth reviewing. Gmelch (1982) defines role expectations as the difference in personal expectations and the expectations established by those the superintendent serves. Open-ended responses within the theme task overload included statements such as “there is simply not enough time or resources to develop people as quickly as I’d like” and “the amount of responsibility that the superintendent is charged with.” Both response categories center on the pressure experienced by Indiana public school superintendents. This pressure may be self-inflicted personal expectations, or pressure from the school board, those the superintendent serves.

Another similarity worth reviewing is the comparability of the responses included in the ASI factor titled interpersonal relations and the open-ended theme identified as staff/personnel issues. The consistency was not only found in the language of the stressors but also in the level of stress experienced by both. In both measures, this area of stress experienced by public school superintendents fell at the bottom, or least stressful, relative to other categories identified in the results. Interpersonal relations includes the stress caused by resolving differences between those who work with the superintendent. This included “feeling staff members don’t understand my goals and expectations” and “trying to resolve differences between/among staff members.” One response to the open-ended item cited stress experienced “when people who I supervise make

bad decisions.” The consistency in responses supports the finding that staff and personnel issues fall low on the superintendents’ list of stressors.

In summary, the first research question of this study was answered by two different measures: a Likert-scale survey and an open-ended query. Participants’ top ranked stressors on Likert-scale items were “Complying with state, federal, and organizational rules” ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 0.68$) and “Imposing excessively high expectations on myself” ($M = 2.09$, $SD = 0.71$). Thirty-five percent of Indiana public school superintendents found complying with various levels of requirements to frequently bother them, and approximately 30 percent of superintendents were frequently bothered by the pressure and expectations they put on themselves. On the open-ended item, participants reported school board relationships (26.2%) as the highest stated source of stress. The second most identified stress theme reported in the open-ended responses was task overload (24.6%).

Research Question 2

How do the variables of gender, age, race/ethnicity, total years in current position, total years as a superintendent, approximate percentage of minority students, approximate percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced status, and location of the school district (urban, suburban, rural) impact perceived stress?

Before delving into the relationship of the eight independent variables and overall stress experienced, the means and standard deviations of these variables were calculated to better understand the traits of the average public school superintendent in the state of Indiana (See Table 7). The categorical variables of gender, race/ethnicity, and location of district have been removed from this table as results were previously shared in Tables 3 and 5 at the start of this chapter.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	53.86	7.630
Total years in your current position	5.83	5.634
Total years as a superintendent	7.45	5.635
Approximate percentage of minority students in your district	11.59	15.554
Approximate percentage of students on free/reduced meals in your district	45.49	14.816

An ANOVA was run for each of the independent variables comparing that variable with a total stress score. The total stress score was calculated by finding the sum of all responses from the 35 stressors. This score allowed for analysis of an overall stress level outside of the five stress factors. The next step included an ANOVA calculation between each independent variable and the overall mean for each of the five stress factors: administrative constraints, administrative responsibilities, interpersonal relations, intrapersonal conflicts, and role expectations. The purpose of these analyses were to determine if any statistically significant relationships existed between any of these variables. Results showed no significant differences between the independent variables of age, race/ethnicity, total years in current position, total years as a superintendent, approximate percentage of minority students, approximate percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced status, and location of the school district with total stress scores or the five stress factors. See Appendix E for the evidence of the lack of statistical significance found between seven of the independent demographic variables and six dependent stress variables.

Total Years in Your Current Position

In response to the findings of non-significance for the variable Total Years in Your Current Position, a review of the subgroups was conducted. The data collected on total years in one's current position were initially divided into five-year spans, which presented skewed results towards less experience. For this reason another option was considered. As stated in the literature review, research says that student achievement is positively impacted by a superintendent who has served at least five years in the same school district (Byrd, Drews, & Johnson, 2006; Myers, 2011; Simpson, 2013; Waters & Marzano, 2009). With this in mind an additional ANOVA was run with the population who have served less than six years ($n = 120$) and those who have served six years or more ($n = 63$).

This ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between those superintendents who have served less than, or more than, six years. Even with the reallocation of participant groups, no statistical significance was found in the area of overall stress, $F(1,182) = 2.45, p = .12$, or the individual breakdown of stress factors: administrative constraints, $F(1,182) = 1.59, p = .21$, administrative responsibilities, $F(1,182) = 0.12, p = .74$, interpersonal relations, $F(1,182) = 1.49, p = .22$, intrapersonal conflicts, $F(1,182) = 2.18, p = .14$, and role expectations, $F(1,182) = 3.97, p = .06$.

Gender

One finding of statistical significance was identified from the results of the ASI. Upon completion of an ANOVA between gender and the five stress factors, it was revealed that female superintendents ($M = 12.06, SD = 2.84$) experience a higher level of stress in the area of intrapersonal conflicts ($p = .048$) than do males ($M = 11.08, SD = 2.47$) in the same stress factor. The seven stressors associated with this factor are broken down in Table 8.

Table 8

Stressors in Intrapersonal Conflicts by Gender

	Female		Male		Sig.
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Imposing excessively high expectations on myself	2.22	0.66	2.07	0.72	0.28
Having to make decisions that affect the lives of individual people that I know (colleagues, staff members, students, etc.)	2.09	0.64	1.84	0.65	0.045*
Feeling that the progress on my job is not what it should or could be	1.75	0.62	1.57	0.70	0.18
Knowing I can't get information needed to carry out my job properly	1.69	0.78	1.52	0.60	0.19
Attempting to meet social expectations (housing, clubs, friends, etc.)	1.5	0.57	1.54	0.61	0.71
Feeling that I have too little authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to me	1.38	0.75	1.36	0.67	0.94
Feeling that I am not fully qualified to handle my job	1.44	0.62	1.2	0.45	0.014**

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Upon review of the seven stressors within the factor of intrapersonal conflicts, two specific stressors are found to be statistically significant. “Having to make decisions that affect the lives of individual people that I know” ($p = .05$) and “feeling that I am not fully qualified to handle my job” ($p = .01$) are the stressors where a difference was experienced between genders, with women experiencing a higher, statistically significant, level of stress.

There is a small population of female public school superintendents in the state of Indiana ($N = 56$) and 32 of these women responded to this survey. Because this study sample is a close representation to the population of female superintendents in the state of Indiana at the time of this study (19.1%), it is a reasonable assumption that these results might be similar if replicated with the total population. These results support the findings of Connerley and Wu (2016) who

identified interpersonal conflicts relating to social life and job strain as a higher form of stress for women than men.

Research Question 3

The final research question guiding this study inquired into what coping strategies public school superintendents identified as successful in managing their job stress. The responses to this item were collected via an open-ended prompt following the ASI portion of the survey. Once again responses were organized by theme. For example, the response “I play golf” was categorized under the theme of “exercise.” Any response that contained more than one item was divided into multiple responses and categorized by the different components of that response. For a complete listing of superintendents’ responses on this open-ended question, please see Appendix G. Responses ($n = 280$) were organized into ten themes (See Table 9.)

The top two themes, exercise ($n = 72$) and family time ($n = 47$), accounted for 42.5% of the results. Superintendent-reported activities in the area of exercise included walking, running, biking, swimming, yard work, and yoga.

The term “family time” may be a general term, but it was identified as the second most important coping strategy utilized by Indiana public school superintendents ($n = 47$). One superintendent emphasized that “it is imperative to take two complete weeks off during the summer to reset.” Although many of the responses were not that specific, the importance of family was evident both in the response tally, and the language used within individual responses. Repeatedly it was emphasized ($n = 47$) that family time needed to be a priority, even if it was necessary to schedule a block of time on the calendar.

Faith, meditation, and reflection ($n = 24$) accounted for the third highest theme of coping strategies used by superintendents. This group of responses included strong and specific

statements. For example, one superintendent said, “Pray about the work I have to do and ask God for the wisdom and strength to make decisions that are best for my students.” Whether seeing themselves as an instrument in supporting children, or meditating at the end of a tough day, superintendents responded modestly and with strong conviction that the work they were doing was important. For example, “Prayer. Patience. Perseverance. Our kids are worth doing this important work.”

Table 9

Themes of Coping Strategies

Coping Theme	<i>n</i>	%
Exercise	72	25.7
Family Time	47	16.8
Colleagues	24	8.6
Prayer/Meditation	24	8.6
Hobbies	18	6.4
Reading	16	5.7
School Related	16	5.7
Unhealthy	12	4.3
Drinking	7	2.5
Getting away	7	2.5

Unfortunately, some superintendents reported using strategies that were not healthy or beneficial means of reducing stress. Unhealthy eating, drinking, and griping about the General Assembly are some of the negative strategies reported by superintendents to manage the day-to-day pressures of the role. Although some responses were humorous, for example, “daydream about doing mean things to school board members” or “eat and get fat” there were seven superintendents (2.5%) who stated they had no coping strategies at all.

Summary

Investigating the stress experienced by public school superintendents serving Indiana’s schools revealed some noteworthy findings. In a comparison of means derived from the

Administrative Stress Index, it was found that the administrative constraints experienced by superintendents was a primary source of stress reported ($M = 1.76$, $SD = 0.43$). Inadequate time, numerous meetings, required procedures, constant interruptions, complying with rules and policies from multiple levels, and the overwhelming feeling that the workload was too heavy to finish within the normal work day were individual stressors that made this stress factor rise to the top. From the voices of district leaders, school board relations caused an immense amount of pressure. Unclear expectations, negativity, personal agendas, micromanagement, lack of district direction, and constant communication all fell on the shoulders of the public school superintendents of Indiana. The school board hires and evaluates these individuals, yet it is the responsibility of the superintendent to guide the school board's work in a positive direction for the administration, staff, families, communities, and students who are impacted.

Analyses revealed one area in which there was a statistically significant difference between demographic groups on the ASI. Results of the ANOVA analyses indicated that gender showed a statistically significant difference between demographic groups in the factor of intrapersonal conflicts ($p = .048$), with females superintendents ($M = 12.06$, $SD = 2.84$) experiencing a higher level of stress than male superintendents ($M = 11.11$, $SD = 2.48$) in response to the seven stressors contained in this stress factor.

What did superintendents identify as the best method for combatting the stress they experience? The top two coping strategies used by the participants were exercise (25.7%) and spending time with family (16.8%). Scheduling time to decompress was also noted by superintendents as essential in the constant effort to serve Indiana's public school students to the best of his or her abilities.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions

This study examined the levels and factors of stress experienced by Indiana public school superintendents. This chapter provides an overview of the study, a review of the findings, conclusions based on the findings, implications regarding the issues raised in the research, and suggestions for future research.

Overview of the Problem

A review of the literature showed very little previous research or understanding regarding the stress experienced by public school superintendents. A member of the Indiana superintendent search team, Dr. Lynn Lehman, stated there was a decrease in the number of applicants and many of those who were viable applicants had limited or no experience in district leadership (Personal communication, March 7, 2017). This was evidenced in the limited years of experience of current Indiana public school superintendents in this study, as slightly less than half (48.6%) of the total participants ($n = 184$) had fewer than six years' experience in the position. With such inexperienced leaders, it was necessary to understand the stress components that would impact them throughout their career.

Not specific to the world of public education, the literature review provided evidence that job stress can have high costs both physiologically and psychologically. Examples of this include increased instances of obesity, heart attacks, and depression (American Psychological Association, 2016; Larimore, 2003; McEwen, 2004; Nelson & Burke, 2000; Sheline, 2003; Starkman, Giordani, Gebarski, & Schteingart, 2003; Wright, 2007). District leaders must have the ability to self-manage as well as effectively partner with other public school superintendents in efforts to reduce occupational stress (CHORUS, 2006).

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to better understand the factors of stress reported by Indiana public school superintendents and to investigate which of those factors creates the most strain on these individuals. There was a gap in the research and understanding of stress experienced by those individuals. This information was gathered to heighten understanding of stress in the superintendency. The analyses and interpretations of these data exposed new strategies for increasing superintendent tenure and personal awareness of their stress levels, as well as advice for hiring committees and school boards in their attempt to secure and retain effective superintendents. The questions that guided this study were:

1. What job issues and responsibilities do public school superintendents perceive to be stressful?
2. How do the variables of gender, age, total years in current position, total years as a superintendent, race/ethnicity, approximate percentage of minority students, approximate percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced status, and location of the school district (urban, suburban, rural) impact perceived stress?
3. What coping strategies do public school superintendents identify as successful in managing job stress?

Review of Methods

This study included a comprehensive review of the literature, which provided a look at stress in management, impact of stress on individuals, and stress factors specific to public school district leadership. Superintendents' emotional and physical health is important not only for them as individuals, but also for the school districts, communities, and students they serve. The health and well-being of these individuals contributes to superintendent tenure, which has been

proven to be a positive influence on student achievement (Byrd, Drews, & Johnson, 2006; Myers, 2011; Simpson, 2013; Waters & Marzano, 2009).

An anonymous online survey approach was utilized to collect information from sitting Indiana public school superintendents. Thirty-five of the 45 survey items were pulled directly from the Administrative Stress Index (Gmelch & Swent, 1982) and required Likert-type responses. The additional queries included demographic variables and two open-response questions. Qualtrics was utilized to collect the responses, and participants were assured of complete anonymity.

The demographic pieces of the survey included the eight independent variables listed in research question two: gender, age, total years in current position, total years as a superintendent, race/ethnicity, approximate percentage of minority students, approximate percentage of students who qualify for free/reduced status, and location of the school district (urban, suburban, and rural). The two additional open-ended response questions requested that the superintendents share what they found to be most stressful in their jobs and what coping strategies they employed to reduce the stress they experienced.

After collecting the data and compiling the results, descriptive statistics provided an overview of the responses submitted by the participants. ANOVA tests were used to compare the demographic information as independent variables, and stress categories as dependent variables. The stress categories, or dependent variables, included an overall stress score and the five individual stress factors: administrative constraints, administrative responsibilities, interpersonal relations, intrapersonal conflicts, and role expectations. The final method of data analyses included coding and categorizing the responses to the open-ended portion. These results were categorized based on frequency of response and organized into common themes.

Major Findings

Results of the ASI (Gmelch & Swent, 1982) administered in this study found that superintendents reported the stressors associated with the factor identified as administrative constraints to be most stressful. This is the same stress factor found to be most bothersome during the Gmelch study in 1982. These stressors included those connected to inadequate time, number of meetings, and required procedures. The specific stressors included in this stress factor were (a) complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies; (b) feeling that I have too heavy a work load, one that I cannot possibly finish during the normal work day; (c) feeling that meetings take up too much time; (d) being interrupted frequently by telephone calls and email; (e) trying to complete reports and other paperwork on time; (f) having my work frequently interrupted by staff members who want to talk; and (g) writing memos, letters, and other communications.

In my study, the raw scores for each of the 35 stressors were reviewed individually. Indiana public school superintendents identified two stressors that exceeded the rating of “occasionally bothers me.” These two stressors were “complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies” ($M = 2.2$, $SD = 0.68$) and “imposing excessively high expectations on myself” ($M = 2.09$, $SD = .071$). The top stressor of this study also echoed the findings of Gmelch & Swent’s study in 1982 where superintendents identified “complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies” as the highest rated stressor.

This current study went one step further in requesting Indiana public school superintendents to provide their own answer to what they found to be most stressful. When these open-ended responses were coded, individual stress themes were identified. School board relations (26.2%) and task overload (24.6%) were found to be prominent themes of stress for

superintendents. Additional themes included school finance (16.9%), politics (13.8%), and staff/personnel issues (10.3%). These themes echoed the research of Farkas, Johnson, and Duffett (2003) as well as Kowalski and Brunner (2011). Farkas et al. described the superintendent as a juggler “one with too few arms and too many balls in the air” (2003, p. 18).

When analyzing the independent variables, one analysis revealed a significant finding. A statistically significant difference was found between men and women in the area of intrapersonal conflicts ($p = .048$). Women ($M = 12.06$, $SD = 2.84$) were found to experience higher levels of stress than men ($M = 11.08$, $SD = 2.47$). Stressors associated with this factor include (a) imposing excessively high expectations on myself, (b) having to make decisions that affect the lives of others, (c) feeling that the progress on my job is not what it should be, (d) knowing I can’t get information needed to carry out my job properly, (e) attempting to meet social expectations (housing, clubs, friends, etc.), (f) feeling that I have too little authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to me, and (g) feeling that I am not fully qualified to handle my job.

Specifically two stressors within this stress factor were found to be significant and identified a higher level of stress experienced by women. “Having to make decisions that affect the lives of the individual people I know” ($M = 1.44$, $SD = .619$, $p = .014$) and “feeling that I am not fully qualified to handle my job” ($M = 2.09$, $SD = .641$, $p = .045$) were identified as stressors that were significantly higher for women than their male counterparts. These results substantiated research by Iwasaki, MacKay, and Ristock (2004) who found that female managers experienced more emotional stress than men related to relationships, meaning they were more worried about other people both in their personal and professional lives. In chapter two, the review of research found the highest stress experienced by female managers was interpersonal

conflicts. This was described as the struggle women experience between their role expectations at work and their responsibilities at home (Connerley & Wu, 2016). Although intrapersonal and interpersonal may sound different, the factors of stress associated with them are very similar.

Women's self-perception may play a part in the significance of the stressor "feeling that I am not fully qualified to handle my job" ($M = 2.09$, $SD = 0.64$). A 2014 study sought to determine the accuracy women have in regards to how their superiors view them (Sturm, Taylor, Atwater, & Braddy, 2014). What they learned was that women believed their evaluators would score them lower than they actually did. Why do women under-predict their abilities? Kenny and DePaulo (1993) concluded that individuals determine how others view them from their own theories about themselves. This has possibly increased the frequency in which women perceive themselves as being under-qualified to handle the role and responsibilities of leadership most often held by men (Kowalski et al., 2011).

Finally the open-ended responses surrounding coping strategies provided by Indiana public school superintendents revealed four positive themes: exercise (25.7%), family time (16.8%), positive collegial relationships (8.6%), and prayer/meditation (8.6%). Those who identified exercise as their primary coping strategy cited activities such as walking, running, biking, swimming, yard work, and yoga. This finding echoes the research of Hawk and Martin (2011) who found 80.7% of superintendents turned to exercise as their primary method of coping with stress. Exercise, time with family, and prayer/meditation have been coping strategies included in multiple research findings (Farmer, 2010; Hawk & Martin, 2011; Litchka, Fenzel, & Polka, 2009). An additional category surfaced and was categorized as unhealthy practices (4.3%). This category included eating excessively, sedentary practices, drinking, and negative

thoughts. Drinking alcohol accounted for 58.3% of responses in the theme identified as unhealthy coping strategies.

Implications for Practice

This study provides two distinct implications for practice. First, the findings of this research identified school board relations as a major factor related to superintendent stress. Finding common goals between the school board and superintendent, avoiding micromanagement by the school board to determine appropriate levels of involvement, educating board members to offset the lack of knowledge surrounding public schools, and combating the personal agendas of some school board members are all stressors reported directly from Indiana's public school superintendents.

Doug Eadie (2016) described the school board and superintendent relationship as "extremely fragile, prone to unravel alarmingly quickly" (p. 12). Mountford (2004) identified two types of power expressed by school board members, "power over" and "power with." "Power over" included board members who define power as authority or control, or the ability to influence others. School board members who viewed their role as "power with" regarded leadership as collaboration and the ability to come together to do great things. In 2001, Fusarelli and Petterson wrote "the relationship between the superintendent and board of education has a significant impact on the quality of a district's educational program" (p. 282). Eadie dedicated an entire chapter of his book, *Governing at the Top: Building a Board-Superintendent Strategic Governing Team* (2016), to maintaining a healthy board-superintendent working relationship. For this reason it is necessary to make this relationship a continuous focus of efforts for both superintendents and school board members.

Although membership in the Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents (IAPSS) is voluntary, this organization is a benefit to a superintendent. This association co-hosts a fall conference with the Indiana School Board Association (ISBA). Together these organizations select strands of current issues in which superintendents and school board members can come together, learn together, and lead together. In addition to these two organizations, The School Superintendents Association (AASA) also provides resources for both superintendents and school boards. *A New Superintendents Journal*, published yearly, is a good example of the learning and training opportunities provided by this organization as it included an article by Terry Grier (2015) titled *Board Relationships 101: Five Lessons of a Battle-Tested Superintendent* in the 2016-17 edition. This article identified lessons from job attainment to shared leadership. Resources provided by AASA include publications, online professional development, networking opportunities, and up-to-date information on important topics or developments in education.

While these collaboration opportunities exist, they do not alleviate the stress experienced by Indiana's public school superintendents. School boards have been a part of public schools since the middle of the 19th century (Bjork, Kowalski, & Browne-Ferrigno, 2014), and yet this entity is still the highest factor of stress superintendents identified in this study. IAPSS has been established since 1960, and IASB has been an organization since 1949; nevertheless, superintendents are still experiencing stress related to school board relations.

Superintendents are required to maintain a relationship with each individual board member as well as the school board as a whole. An important implication of this study is that additional or different efforts need to be made to support superintendents without the presence of school board members. Superintendents need the opportunity to come together to support each

other, speak frankly, and hone their skills in maintaining productive school board relations. This is an area of collegiality that can advance schools and also strengthen the network of superintendents throughout the state of Indiana.

Not only do superintendents need the opportunity to grow professionally without the presence of school board members, school board members need the opportunity to grow professionally without the presence of the superintendent. A large portion of the school board members' responsibilities are dedicated to conducting yearly evaluations of the superintendent, negotiating the superintendent's contract, and possibly recruiting and hiring a new superintendent. Many of these responsibilities require courage in addition to sound communication skills. School board members need the opportunity to learn to better understand their roles and responsibilities as well as learn about the difficult tasks that sometimes come with the position without the presence of the superintendent. These professional learning opportunities may also open doors to collaboration and the opportunity to learn from the experience of others. These three tiers of training: superintendents by themselves, school board members by themselves, and professional development together may help alleviate some of the stress that superintendents experience due to school board relations.

The second implication for practice was found in the statistically significant result that identified higher levels of stress for female superintendents in the area of intrapersonal conflicts. The stressor in this factor found to have the highest rating was "imposing excessively high expectations on myself." Per the Indiana Department of Education (2017), Indiana public school districts are led predominantly by males (80.9%). Because of the low percentage of female superintendents in the state of Indiana (19.1%) and the realization that they share common stressors among them, female public school superintendents may be more inclined to build and

maintain stronger collegial relationships. Knowing that up to 84% of their female colleagues experience the same stressors could possibly break down walls of defense and potentially allow personal and professional growth from the knowledge and experiences of other women who serve in the same role.

One reason for anonymity in this research was to increase honesty in responses, thereby revealing authentic and meaningful findings. In a position with high public scrutiny, it is necessary to ensure confidentiality. In a male-dominated role, it is important for female superintendents ($n = 32$) to collaborate and support one another. This could include intentional collaboration opportunities either electronically or in person, specific professional development, or at a minimum, social-emotional support for one another through a variety of positive interactions. Therefore, an important implication for practice would be increased opportunities for female superintendents to meet, collaborate, network, and potentially provide mentoring support for women who have recently taken on the role.

In addition to potentially increasing the collegiality of female public school superintendents, this significant finding may also highlight a need for gender bias training for Indiana public school superintendents and the school boards they serve. In a male-dominated profession, intentional and unintentional bias may have an impact on the stress levels of female superintendents. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) identified that gender bias is not only expressed by men towards women. They state that “strong evidence exists that women do not support other women in getting and keeping a superintendency. The reasons are directly aligned with endemic cultural biases regarding men’s and women’s roles” (p. 29). Gender bias training is not just about women. This research highlights that gender bias may exist in the superintendency and training is necessary.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research was conducted in an effort to increase the understanding and awareness of stress experienced by Indiana's public school superintendents. As stated in chapter one, this is an area with limited research. This study only provided a starting point. This study identified the stressors with the highest influence along with common themes of stress and coping strategies, but there is still much to learn about the stress impacting the role of public school superintendents in and outside the state of Indiana.

First, this study should be replicated in different states with the same structure of leadership to determine if the findings can be generalized to a larger population. The Administrative Stress Index (Gmelch & Swent, 1982) has been utilized in other studies, but the majority of those studies were focused on building leadership. Another option for gathering results could include more qualitative methods for the open-ended responses. In this study, the researcher made a judgment for each open-ended response and organized the responses into themes. Frequencies were counted based on these judgments. Future research could include an analytic rubric for analyzing open-coding responses specific to the superintendency. If the research produces different results, there may be an opportunity for all to learn from the success of others.

Second, future research could delve specifically into superintendent and school board relationships. This was one of the most frequently mentioned stressors reported by superintendents in this study; therefore, it is important to learn what specific elements increase the stress or affect the productivity of Indiana public school superintendents due to relationships between the governing board and district leader. With better understanding of the problems and potential solutions of school board relationships, school superintendents throughout the state of

Indiana may hone their ability to serve as facilitators between the school board and school district. This effort may also aid in the creation of support, which can be utilized as a resource to new superintendents taking their first position in serving a school district.

Finally, additional research could focus on the benefits and rewards of the occupation identified as Indiana public school superintendent. This research could go beyond the social-emotional element to precise tasks within the position that assist in making the role worthwhile and potentially increase the functionality of a school district. This study highlighted the larger retirement percentage (Boyland & Ellis, 2015), the decreasing pool of candidates (Dr. Lynn Lehman, personal communication, March 7, 2017), and the strain, both physiologically and psychologically, created by the numerous stressors associated with the position. Equally as important is the other end of the continuum. Why do professionals choose to be superintendents, and what makes them stay? Sharp, Malone, and Walter (2002) researched what motivated someone to become a superintendent. This study took place twenty-five years ago. Although their findings “I thought I could make a difference” may still be relevant, the challenges and expectations of superintendents have changed. Further research should explore how we can best utilize these findings to not only decrease the stress experienced, but also to provide a different approach to some of the more difficult tasks associated with school district leadership.

Conclusion

This chapter both summarized and interpreted key findings of this research. This study contributes to the very limited existing body of research. Recommendations and suggestions for further research were also provided.

Based on the literature review, the results of this research are somewhat in conflict with what one would hypothesize about stress experienced by Indiana public school superintendents.

Clearly, the role carries many demands in terms of pressures and responsibilities. The findings of this research were different in that the majority of the means associated with the thirty-five stressors fell in the “occasionally bothers me” range, which did not indicate high levels of stress for respondents. Hawk and Martin’s (2011) research reported that over 50 percent of superintendents in their study experienced high levels of stress. Glass and Franceschini (2007) found that 59.2 percent of superintendents experienced “very great stress.” Robinson and Shakeshaft (2016) identified 11 stressors in which superintendents reported moderate to extreme stress. However, my research did not find a single stressor with a mean approaching the level of “frequently bothers me.”

Although somewhat surprising, the results still have purpose. These results may be timely, reflecting the current experiences of Indiana public school superintendents. They may be beneficial on a personal level to superintendents who feel they are the only individual struggling with the weight associated with this occupation. These results may also benefit the spouses, or significant others, who are trying to better understand the role, the time commitments, and the pressures associated with being a public school superintendent. These results may also be beneficial to the professional associations supporting superintendents.

As stated at the beginning of this research, stress is not a question of existence; it is a factor of functioning. The more educated we can become about ourselves and our personal experiences with stress, the faster we can employ coping strategies to reduce stress. The healthier Indiana public school superintendents are in terms of mental, emotional, and physical health, the better they can serve those students who rely on their leadership.

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APPENDIX A: Administrative Stress Index

(Gmelch & Swent, 1982)

School administrators have identified the following work-related items as factors of stress. It is possible that some of these situations affect you the same or differently than your colleagues. Please complete the following survey indicating how these factors bother you.

Please use the following scale to rate your responses:

Rarely Bothers Me	Occasionally Bothers Me	Frequently Bothers Me
1	2	3

	Item	1	2	3
1	Being interrupted frequently by telephone calls/email			
2	Supervising and coordinating the tasks of many people			
3	Feeling staff members don't understand my goals and expectations			
4	Feeling that I am not fully qualified to handle my job			
5	Knowing I can't get information needed to carry out my job properly			
6	Thinking that I will not be able to satisfy the conflicting demands of those who have authority over me			
7	Trying to resolve differences between/among students			
8	Feeling not enough is expected of me by my superiors			
9	Having my work frequently interrupted by staff members who want to talk			
10	Imposing excessively high expectations on myself			
11	Feeling pressure for better job performance over and above what I think is reasonable			
12	Writing memos, letters, and other communications			
13	Trying to resolve differences with my superior			
14	Speaking in front of groups			
15	Attempting to meet social expectations (housing, clubs, friends, etc.)			

16	Not knowing what my supervisor thinks of me or how he/she evaluates my performance			
17	Having to make decisions that affect the lives of individual people that I know (colleagues, staff members, students, etc.)			
18	Feeling I have to participate in school activities outside of the normal working hours at the expense of my personal time			
19	Feeling that I have too much responsibility delegated to me by my supervisor			
20	Trying to resolve parent/school conflicts			
21	Preparing and allocating budget resources			
22	Feeling that I have too little authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to me			
23	Handling student discipline problems			
24	Being involved in the collective bargaining process			
25	Evaluating staff members' performance			
26	Feeling that I have too heavy a work load, one that I cannot possibly finish during the normal work day			
27	Complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies			
28	Feeling that the progress on my job is not what it should or could be			
29	Administering the negotiated contract (grievances, interpretation, etc.)			
30	Being unclear on just what the scope and responsibilities of my job are			
31	Feeling that meetings take up too much time			
32	Trying to complete reports and other paperwork on time			
33	Trying to resolve differences between/among staff members			
34	Trying to influence my immediate supervisor's actions and decisions that affect me			
35	Trying to gain public approval and/or financial support for school programs			
36	What do you find most stressful about your job?	Open Response:		

37	What coping strategies do you employ to combat the job stress you experience?	Open Response:		
38	Gender	Male	Female	
39	Age	Open Response:		
40	Total years in current position	Open Response:		
41	Total years as a superintendent	Open Response:		
42	Race/Ethnicity	Black/African American Hispanic/Latino Indigenous/Native American Asian Pacific Islander White Multiracial Other Prefer not to say		
43	Approximate percentage of minority students in your district	Open Response:		
44	Approximate percentage of students on free/reduced meals in your district	Open Response:		
45	Location	Urban	Suburban	Rural

APPENDIX B: Letter of Support: Dr. Walter Gmelch

UNIVERSITY OF
SAN FRANCISCO

School of Education

University of San Francisco
School of Education
Department of Leadership Studies
Organization and Leadership Program

February 18, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

I, Dr. Walter Gmelch, the author and owner of the instrument, the *Administrative Stress Index* is giving you, Amber Targgart, doctoral student at Ball State University, permission to reproduce and administer the index for research purposes. It is my understanding and expectation that Ms. Targgart will in no way gain financially from the use of the index and will solely utilize it as part of her doctoral dissertation project. My only other request is that Ms. Targgart cite the copyright (Walter H. Gmelch @ University of San Francisco) for the ASI and provide a brief summary of the results to me for my records.

Sincerely,

Dr. Walter Gmelch

APPENDIX C: Letter of Support: IAPSS**Letter of Support: Dr. J.T. Coopman, Executive Director for IAPSS**

J.T. Coopman
Executive Director
Email: jtcoopman@iapss-in.org

Jim Freeland
Director of Membership Services
Email: jfreeland@iapss-in.org



One North Capitol Avenue, Suite 1215
Indianapolis, IN 46204-2095
Phone 317/639-0336 • Fax 317/639-4360

To: Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
2000 University Avenue
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306

From: Dr. J. T. Coopman, Executive Director
Indiana Association of Public School Superintendents (IAPSS)
One North Capitol #1215
Indianapolis, IN 46204

April 3, 2017

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter to designate IAPSS endorsement of the study, "Stress in the Superintendency." This study is being conducted by Amber Targgart, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Leadership at Ball State University and is currently under review by the Institutional Review Board.

One of our goals at IAPSS is to prepare and support knowledgeable, ethical, and effective leaders who, in turn, serve to provide quality education for all Indiana children through public education. The results of Mrs. Targgart's study should prove helpful to both superintendents who are currently serving as well as those who aspire to be Indiana public school superintendents. Mrs. Targgart has permission to note that the IAPSS endorses her study in her recruitment email.

As Executive Director of IAPSS I look forward to reviewing the results of Mrs. Targgart's research.

Sincerely,

Dr. J. T. Coopman,
Executive Director, IAPSS

APPENDIX D: ASI Stress Indicators by Order of Highest to Lowest Influence

Item	Factor	Stressor	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	% of responses		
						R	O	F
27	AC	Complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies	173	2.20	0.68	15.0	49.7	35.3
10	IC	Imposing excessively high expectations on myself	173	2.09	0.71	20.8	49.1	30.1
17	IC	Having to make decisions that affect the lives of individual people that I know (colleagues, staff members, students, etc.)	173	1.89	0.65	27.2	57.2	15.6
21	AR	Preparing and allocating budget resources	173	1.88	0.72	32.9	46.8	20.2
35	AR	Trying to gain public approval and/or financial support for school programs	173	1.85	0.70	31.8	50.3	17.9
26	AC	Feeling that I have too heavy a work load, one that I cannot possibly finish during the normal work day	173	1.82	0.80	42.8	34.1	23.1
18	RE	Feeling I have to participate in school activities outside of the normal working hours at the expense of my personal time	173	1.81	0.74	38.7	42.2	19.1
31	AC	Feeling that meetings take up too much time	173	1.81	0.69	35.3	49.7	15.0
6	RE	Thinking that I will not be able to satisfy the conflicting demands of those who have authority over me	173	1.80	0.77	41.0	36.4	22.5
1	AC	Being interrupted frequently by telephone calls and email	173	1.79	0.62	32.4	57.2	10.4
24	AR	Being involved in the collective bargaining process	173	1.70	0.72	46.2	38.2	15.6
3	IR	Feeling staff members don't understand my goals and expectations	173	1.68	0.65	43.4	47.4	9.2
20	IR	Trying to resolve parent/school conflicts	173	1.68	0.60	39.9	53.2	6.9
32	AC	Trying to complete reports and other paperwork on time	173	1.67	0.66	43.9	45.1	11.0
11	RE	Feeling pressure for better job performance over and above what I think is reasonable	173	1.66	0.74	50.9	32.9	16.2
28	IC	Feeling that the progress on my job is not what it should or could be	173	1.59	0.69	52.6	36.4	11.0
33	IR	Trying to resolve differences between/among staff members	173	1.58	0.64	51.4	40.5	8.1
5	IC	Knowing I can't get information needed to carry out my job properly	173	1.55	0.63	53.8	38.7	7.5

13	IR	Trying to resolve differences with my superior	173	1.54	0.70	59.5	29.5	11.0
15	IC	Attempting to meet social expectations (housing, clubs, friends, etc.)	173	1.54	0.60	50.9	43.4	5.8
16	RE	Not knowing what my supervisor thinks of me or how he/she evaluates my performance	173	1.53	0.72	61.3	25.4	13.3
25	AR	Evaluating staff members' performance	173	1.53	0.64	55.5	36.4	8.1
2	AR	Supervising and coordinating the tasks of many people	173	1.52	0.63	55.5	37.0	7.5
34	IR	Trying to influence my immediate supervisor's actions and decisions that affect me	173	1.51	0.72	62.4	24.9	12.7
9	AC	Having my work frequently interrupted by staff members who want to talk	173	1.49	0.60	56.6	38.2	5.2
12	AC	Writing memos, letters, and other communications	173	1.47	0.60	58.4	35.8	5.8
29	AR	Administering the negotiated contract (grievances, interpretation, etc.)	173	1.43	0.62	64.7	28.9	6.4
19	RE	Feeling that I have too much responsibility delegated to me by my supervisor	173	1.36	0.61	70.5	22.5	6.9
22	IC	Feeling that I have too little authority to carry out responsibilities assigned to me	173	1.36	0.68	75.1	13.9	11.0
4	IC	Feeling that I am not fully qualified to handle my job	173	1.24	0.49	78.6	18.5	2.9
14	AR	Speaking in front of groups	173	1.24	0.45	76.9	22.0	1.2
30	RE	Being unclear on just what the scope and responsibilities of my job are	173	1.23	0.53	81.5	13.9	4.6
7	IR	Trying to resolve differences between/among students	173	1.21	0.44	81.5	17.3	1.2
23	IR	Handling student discipline problems	173	1.16	0.37	85.0	15.0	0.0
8	RE	Feeling not enough is expected of me by my superiors	173	1.10	0.32	91.3	8.7	0.0

*Note. AC=Administrative constraints, AR=Administrative responsibilities, IR=Interpersonal relations, IC=Intrapersonal conflicts, RE=Role expectations

**Note. R = Rarely, O = Occasionally, F = Frequently

APPENDIX E: ANOVA Results for Non-Statistically Significant Variable References

Administrative constraints					
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Age	183	1.75	0.43	1.89	0.13
Race/Ethnicity	184	1.75	0.43	0.27	0.90
Years in Current Position	184	1.75	0.43	1.59	0.21
Total years as a superintendent	183	1.75	0.44	0.76	0.56
% of Free/Reduced Lunch	183	1.75	0.43	0.03	0.97
% of Minority Students	180	1.75	0.43	2.71	0.70
Location of the School District	182	1.76	0.43	0.82	0.44
<i>Note. *p<.05, **p<.01</i>					
Administrative responsibilities					
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Age	183	1.59	0.40	0.65	0.59
Race/Ethnicity	184	1.59	0.40	0.97	0.43
Years in Current Position	184	1.59	0.40	0.12	0.74
Total years as a superintendent	183	1.60	0.40	0.43	0.79
% of Free/Reduced Lunch	183	1.60	0.40	0.42	0.66
% of Minority Students	180	1.60	0.40	0.97	0.38
Location of the School District	182	1.60	0.40	0.00	1.00
<i>Note. *p<.05, **p<.01</i>					
Interpersonal relations					
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Age	183	1.48	0.35	0.83	0.48
Race/Ethnicity	184	1.48	0.35	0.24	0.92
Years in Current Position	184	1.48	0.35	1.49	0.22
Total years as a superintendent	183	1.48	0.35	0.14	0.97
% of Free/Reduced Lunch	183	1.48	0.35	0.95	0.39
% of Minority Students	180	1.48	0.35	0.44	0.65
Location of the School District	182	1.48	0.35	0.49	0.61
<i>Note. *p<.05, **p<.01</i>					

Intrapersonal conflicts					
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Age	183	1.61	0.36	0.09	0.97
Race/Ethnicity	184	1.61	0.36	0.27	0.90
Years in Current Position	184	1.61	0.36	2.18	0.14
Total years as a superintendent	183	1.61	0.36	1.29	0.28
% of Free/Reduced Lunch	183	1.61	0.36	0.60	0.55
% of Minority Students	180	1.61	0.37	1.24	0.29
Location of the School District	182	1.61	0.36	0.21	0.81

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Role expectations					
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Age	183	1.50	0.41	0.43	0.74
Race/Ethnicity	184	1.50	0.41	0.27	0.90
Years in Current Position	184	1.50	0.41	3.97	0.04
Total years as a superintendent	183	1.50	0.41	0.34	0.85
% of Free/Reduced Lunch	183	1.50	0.41	1.32	0.27
% of Minority Students	180	1.51	0.41	2.09	0.13
Location of the School District	182	1.50	0.41	0.97	0.38

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Total stress					
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Age	183	1.59	0.32	0.21	0.89
Race/Ethnicity	184	1.59	0.32	0.17	0.96
Years in Current Position	184	1.59	0.32	2.45	0.12
Total years as a superintendent	183	1.59	0.31	0.53	0.72
% of Free/Reduced Lunch	183	1.59	0.31	0.77	0.47
% of Minority Students	180	1.59	0.32	1.68	0.19
Location of the School District	182	1.59	0.31	0.05	0.95

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

APPENDIX F: “What do you find most stressful in your job?”**School Board Relationships (*n* = 51, 26.2%)**

1. Dealing with individual school board members.
2. Board Members who do not understand their roles and responsibilities.
3. School Board
4. Lack of understanding from my school board.
5. Unclear expectations of my supervisors.
6. Dealing with school board members that do not understand their role as a school board member.
7. School Board members.
8. Dealing with Board members who want to micro-manage the administrative team members.
9. This is my first year in this corporation. My prior corporation and board provided frequent feedback and we had open communication. This board does not provide the kind of feedback or direction I have been accustomed to in the past. That is sometimes quite stressful.
10. Working with board members that do not understand the complexities of this position yet believe they have the expertise to resolve matters without the inclusion of staff from the district.
11. Micromanagement of Board members
12. Working around individual Board members' personal agendas.
13. Working with a seven member Board.
14. Dysfunctional Board members intent on promoting personal agendas against the best interest of the school district.
15. Board Member relationships (politics).
16. Lack of an engaged Board of Education.
17. As a Supt, managing 7 diverse individuals as school board members.
18. Politics of the school board relationship
19. Demands of two school board members who want to be over-involved and text me a lot.
20. Working with the school board; helping them understand their role as well as the administrators' roles in the school
21. Managing the board and the community relationship. I feel like my job is always on the line with each decision made.
22. Convincing board members of a positive direction to go when they already have preconceived notions of how they think it should go.
23. Working with School Board members that refuse to operate under the expected parameters of a professional School Board member.
24. Trying to get my board too engaged in priorities beyond athletics.
25. The most stressful part is without a doubt working with the school board members.
26. Managing the School Board and Union President.
27. Having a school board that does not have any background in education but want to make major changes or decisions for education and not financial decisions. They are trying to do my job.
28. My school board micromanages me.

29. Negative board members.
 30. Dealing with micro-managing board members.
 31. Working with unqualified Board members. Trying to keep a positive culture in an era where the public school are constantly under attack and disrespected by the State legislature and congress.
 32. Trying to lead the school district and comparing the demands of the school board with the realities from the school population.
 33. School Board Members involvement in day to day or personnel issues.
 34. Board members who are kind hearted but have NO CLUE about school operations and intentionally choose not to learn about school operations and needs. They only make decisions based on how they liked/disliked something when they were in school 20 or 30 years ago.
 35. Board members wanting to micromanage and wanting to control things that are outside of their roles and responsibilities.
 36. A school board that does not speak to one another which results in my having to run interference in an attempt to get them to work together. They do not like one another and some members are more to blame than others.
 37. Board Relations
 38. Dealing with a school board that feels it is important for them to show how much authority they have over something they have no clue about. A board president that thinks he is the end all for the corporation and his decisions are the only ones that count. He also is in and out of the buildings day-in, day-out trying to undermine everything we are building.
 39. Parent, board, and employee complaints/special interests.
 40. Board members demands
 41. There is no way to overcome the biases of certain Board members who supplant my long-serving knowledge and judgment in the situations of this realm for their own. This is the single most demotivating aspect of my job.
 42. Working with School Board members who want to micromanage my job.
 43. Board Relations
 44. Dealing with seven different personalities and levels of experience as board members. A lack of understanding of the role of a board member that leads to frequent attempts to micromanage the school corporation's daily routine.
 45. The Board of School Trustees is very inconsistent with how they want things done. It depends on WHO it is and if they are connected to anyone. Too much politics and I feel like I'm walking a landmine.
 46. Dealing with board members wanting to interfere with my job responsibilities.
 47. School Board micro-managing.
 48. Dealing with the school board and their unrealistic expectations.
 49. 1.) The Board 2.) People's lack of knowledge of how funds, policies and so forth work.
 50. Managing board members.
 51. Establishing and maintaining positive working relationships and appropriate channels of communication with the school board as a whole, as well as with individual members of the board, is critically important.
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Task Overload ($n = 48$, 24.6%)

1. The expectations that have grown over time of the Superintendent.
2. Time restraints. Not enough time.
3. When several key issues are all happening at the same time.
4. There are not enough hours in the day to complete all that needs to be done.
5. Finding time to complete duties in a small corporation. Larger corporations have additional personnel to do some of the duties I have.
6. Unexpected or unanticipated demands with the expectation of immediate resolution.
7. Overall responsibility for all of our students and staff.
8. The quantity of work that needs to be done in the position.
9. Time demands - finding a healthy balance between family and work.
10. Dealing with everyday crises.
11. Being in a small school I have to wear many different hats. (Transportation director, budgeting, grant writing, personnel, HR, and overseeing every department).
12. Overall, the amount of hours to do the job well is what is most stressful. I do it to myself because I attend many functions - fine arts, athletics, etc. To be successful, I believe it is crucial.
13. Paper work, especially rewriting policies and written evaluation of administrative staff.
14. It often seems that time is an issue, not enough hours in the day to accomplish everything.
15. There is simply not enough time or resources to develop people as quickly as I'd like.
16. In a small district, I wear many different hats of responsibility. It is nearly impossible to be everything for everybody, but it is what it is. All I can do is my best.
17. Not having an assistant and having to wear so many hats.
18. Too much responsibility with little human resource available to lighten the load.
19. The amount of responsibility that the superintendent is charged with.
20. Balancing all of the stakeholders needs.
21. The time it takes. Easily 60-70 hours a week and I'm still not caught up.
22. The demands of being available 24/7. The fact that everyone wants something from me.
23. Allocation of time - balancing duties, daily needs, and state reports, along with frequent meetings.
24. Time constraints - Attempting to get everything that needs to be done within a reasonable amount of time.
25. As a one-person shop with no assistants, the pace for investigating and resolving issues at times gets pretty frenetic...additionally, trying to get adults to act like adults can be problematic.
26. As the superintendent of a small school district, I am the superintendent, business manager, director of transportation, and pretty much jack of all trades. It is difficult to, at times, determine what is most important/which fire to put out first.
27. Time and the feeling of being married to the job.
28. Not enough time, many demands placed on me being the only administrator in central office.
29. Feeling that I am doing too many things in a small district; just too much rests on my shoulders and we don't have the staff to spread things around.
30. Trying to get everything done - not enough time.

31. I am a one person at a small school district. I do not have enough people to all of the jobs that I need to have to perform at a highly effective rate.
32. The work is never done. It seems impossible to be an educational leader, a financial leader, and a community leader at the same time.
33. The scope of duties and span of control are very broad. Can't do or know all. Must be able to deal with ambiguity.
34. Enough time to complete tasks and having properly trained people that can carry out his or her duties.
35. Without a doubt workload.
36. Too many areas to cover especially since I am the only administrator in the central office.
37. The volume of work is very large. In a small rural district the superintendent is often the only central office administrator and wears all hats.
38. Trying to fit all of the responsibilities while still finding family time.
39. Managing multiple task and deadlines while being expected to become actively involved in the community and attend multiple school functions.
40. The responsibility of being responsible for the safety and well-being of all students and staff at my corporation.
41. The commitment outside of the 7 a.m. - 5 p.m. work day.
42. The knowledge that my decisions impact over 4000 people and wanting to make the best decision I can in service for them.
43. The expectation I put on myself.
44. Managing needs and action steps in the order necessary to achieve long term success. Listening to subordinates who provide too much information that I do not need to make decisions; but much pressure is put on listening to show I care.
45. Email - it allows the entire school community to have access to you at any time with the expectation of a quick response.
46. The unexpected events that are caused by issues that were not forecasted or seen by me.
47. The effectiveness of my role plays a critical part in the overall success of my district. Thousands of people are depending upon our success to be prepared for their futures as well as for employment and other economic factors. If a superintendent does not feel that pressure, they are missing something.
48. Interruptions on a daily basis... weekends... cell phones & emails contribute to everyone's stress levels...

School Finance (*n* = 33, 16.9%)

1. Not having enough financial support from the State of Indiana.
2. Lack of financial resources to meet the needs of students.
3. School funding
4. Budget and other items involving finance.
5. Finances... state does not support public schools.
6. Financing the operation to include proposed innovations.
7. The State of Indiana attacking public education and cutting funding that truly makes it very difficult to keep the bus on the road.
8. Having to try to figure out where to get the funding to maintain/improve programs.

9. Continual fiscal reductions and challenges.
 10. Facility and Financial Constraints
 11. Funding level and state legislature.
 12. The lack of physical and financial resources.
 13. Making the money ends meet.
 14. Every day is different, school finance in rural schools is the most stressful thing about this job.
 15. Finances! Continuing to lose state funding based on enrollments and making "guesses" on budgets every year because of the funding issue. So many unfunded mandates from state and federal governments.
 16. Financial
 17. The state regulations and their lack of support and financial funding. We seem to be in an era of anti-public schools sentiments.
 18. Trying to fulfill state and federal unfunded mandates all while making our budget work and being able to provide compensation increases to our staff. Trying to meet all of the state mandates that keep changing every couple of years. Trying to continue to keep morale high in a profession that has been consistently devalued.
 19. Having enough money
 20. Budget shortfall and the affect it has on EVERYTHING.
 21. The adequate and equitable distribution of resources.
 22. Trying to meet ever changing and unfunded state mandates while understaffed.
 23. Lack of needed funding for conducting the programs & services most needed in our community. Feeling that we must "compete" for students in rural communities where the populations are declining, and several smaller schools are just "robbing Peter to save Paul."
 24. The amount of work and j\hours needed to do an exceptional job within the budget that must be used. No money for additional administrative help and a legislature that demands more administrative work load, reporting, and program implementation while demanding that more money be spent in the classroom and not on administration.
 25. Finances
 26. Dealing with union leaders that simply will not admit to the financial situation in Indiana
 27. Budget uncertainty
 28. Pressure to improve progress but lacking the resources to implement the programs needed.
 29. Budget is very stressful.
 30. Our district is in financial difficulty, so that is very stressful.
 31. Financially being able to stay above water in a small rural school due to budget cuts.
 32. Budget constraints and the knowledge that my decisions affect students' futures and staff members' livelihoods.
 33. Problems I cannot control and people who are not educators who are given authority to govern.
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Politics (*n* = 27, 13.8%)

1. Waiting on the General Assembly to pass laws affecting public education.
2. The legislative session--trying to work through all the unnecessary changes and political unrest--at the state and national level.
3. State and Federal mandates, from more and more entities, that hinder instead of assist in the process of educating children.
4. State and Federal Mandates and Legislation changes at the State level.
5. The negative attitude promoted by politicians concerning public education. The only real thing that stresses me about the job.
6. State and Federal regulations that take local control away from school districts.
7. Implementing legislation that negatively impacts schools.
8. Time management caused by excessive state and federal mandates.
9. Keeping up with changing legislation and federal rules. It is especially frustrating to complete lengthy federal reports, such as the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), that appear to have no value to the students in my school corporation.
10. Guessing what the General Assembly will do to public education next.
11. Lack of support (state and federal level) and/or resources to do the job correctly
12. The fact that there is so little support for public education...
13. Staying on top of the legal aspects of student rights and public expectations.
14. State regulations that I feel are not in the best interest of the children and families that we serve.
15. Constant changes from the state.
16. The continual change occurring at the state and federal levels and managing how that may or may not impact my district.
17. State and federal regulations and changes
18. The current political climate in Indiana which is moving toward privatization of public education. This is an effort to segregate students by economic levels and will ultimately hurt boys and girls in our state for years to come. This is bad policy and bad governance and it frustrates me because the general population does not understand what is happening.
19. Working an uphill battle against the State. Worrying about budget cuts and finding qualified staffing.
20. The most stressful part of my job is trying to revolutionize our education system into something that facilitates learning in ways that are meaningful to our children in this era. Our legislature's policies are antiquated, but public schools are blamed. Educational innovations are stifled because teachers are fearful of the high stakes and standardized testing expectations inferred by our legislators. We try to minimize this fear, but it is very difficult to overcome.
21. Politics
22. Meeting all of the requirements of the state yet they do not fund all of the demands. The state wants more money put towards instruction, yet all of the reporting and red tape requires more in terms of what they determine as administration.
23. State legislature adding programs and requirements without financial support.
24. Constant requirements of new legislation.
25. Keeping up on current laws and policies,

26. The impact that politics play in school legislation and decisions. Most people making these laws and changes truly have no idea what running a district is like.
27. Negative community members and pressures from DOE on testing.

Staff/Personnel Issues (*n* = 20, 10.3%)

1. Making decisions about staffing levels.
2. Teacher unions
3. Personnel matters...not being able to share what is really happening. Sometimes you just have to take a beating on social media.
4. Personnel
5. If I am making decision of dismissing staff due to Reduction in Force.
6. Teacher negotiations
7. Apathy among too many staff members.
8. Personnel
9. Personnel issues, meaning conflict between staff or conflict between staff/community/students.
10. Negotiations with teachers.
11. The lack of caring from staff members. Those that do not work hard and complain or criticize about others.
12. Personnel decisions are the most difficult decisions administrators - at any level - have to make. Hiring; retaining, evaluating or dismissing; promotion or re-assignment; coaching/mentoring; and compensating are all challenging.
13. Staff issues
14. Handling personnel issues and public sentiment toward handling difficult situations with personnel.
15. Personnel Issues
16. Personnel issues
17. Personnel issues
18. Staff members not applying 100% towards their students and school.
19. Marginal, negative employees
20. When people who I supervise make bad decisions.

Non-coded Responses (*n* = 16, 8.2%)

1. Dealing with social media and the negativity and inaccurate information that is spread by misinformed parents and patrons.
2. Social media
3. I also find it lonely in trying to find someone you can trust to discuss issues or just vent.
4. Dealing with negative community members.
5. Combating the rumor mill and social media.
6. People who post comments about the school on social media and they don't have the facts.
7. Conflicts among parents and schools.
8. Have been in this position long enough that I don't let much stress me.
9. The people in the community who are constantly negative.

10. I hate social media. You have to get out ahead of social media, but then you have to lay low during the blitz of social media on the school for doing something the public wants to complain about.
 11. Parents not taking or accepting responsibility for theirs or their students' actions. Some of the parents then hire lawyers and then bring suit against the corporation. While we usually prevail in the suits, we have spent valuable resources (money and time) to fight them.
 12. Unreasonable people. People who allow fear of the unknown to deny realities and entrench.
 13. Parents who have unreasonable expectations of what the schools are supposed to be doing and can do. We are expected to solve all the social problems of our society. Parents feel that we need to deal with items that are not even school related or have happened at school. Also, parents want to dictate what we will and will not do and some are very unreasonable in a public school setting.
 14. It is a lonely job and there is little gratitude shown by others for the work done.
 15. Snow days.
 16. Making decisions on snow days.
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APPENDIX G: “What coping strategies do you employ to combat the job stress you experience?”

Exercise (*n* = 72, 25.7%)

1. Exercise
2. Exercise
3. Daily Exercise
4. My coping strategies include cycling (I average about 50 miles / week),
5. I exercise
6. I exercise and play music
7. Exercise
8. Finding balance in my life personally and professionally through exercise.
9. I exercise frequently.
10. Exercise
11. walking, listening to music,
12. I work out when I can.
13. Exercise
14. Golf
15. Exercise
16. I exercise 3-4 times a week.
17. Exercise
18. Walking
19. Exercise
20. Work out
21. I try to exercise as often as I can.
22. Exercise
23. Working out on a regular basis.
24. Exercise
25. Music, walking
26. Work out, walk
27. Exercise
28. Exercise
29. Exercise
30. I exercise and make sure I stay away from negative influences.
31. I work out as often as possible.
32. Exercising
33. Exercise
34. Physical Workouts
35. Get out on time and get a good workout in. Make sure I balance work and personal time.
Refuse to accept responsibility for the feelings of others and gauge my performance on results not opinions of those around me.
36. Exercise
37. When I get to a point of high level stress, I take a walk, drive, or go home for a bit to ensure I make the best choice I can make.
38. Running

39. I walk my dog every day. I stay away from negative people when possible.
 40. Try to make time to exercise.
 41. Physical exercise and trying to maintain a healthy lifestyle.
 42. Exercise. I am a runner and compete in at least one long distance race every 6 months in order to stay on a training regimen.
 43. Exercise
 44. Doing simple tasks at home such as mowing the lawn.
 45. Yoga!
 46. Walking, playing music,
 47. Exercise
 48. Exercise
 49. Exercise; bike riding
 50. Exercise and laughter are very important.
 51. Exercise
 52. Yard work
 53. AM workouts are essential to hedge the stress. I also strategically plan my professional development days away to reduce the tension of constant pressure in the role.
 54. I schedule a time to exercise every day.
 55. Exercise
 56. Exercise regularly
 57. Exercise
 58. I enjoy swimming, being outdoors.
 59. Walking
 60. I exercise and try to take time off to recharge.
 61. I work out on a regular basis.
 62. Exercise
 63. Yard work (at my own pace).....exercise when I do it!
 64. Walking exercise
 65. I run or do physical activity.
 66. Running.
 67. Yard work.
 68. Mowing the lawn
 69. Eat properly, get plenty of rest and take care of yourself! Exercise when and where possible.
 70. Physical activity.
 71. Walk my dog, jog and do physical labor to displace my aggressive feelings.
 72. Exercise
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Family Time (n = 47, 16.8%)

1. Family is big.
2. I spend time with friends and family.
3. I talk to colleagues and my family.
4. Spend time with family.
5. Focused quality time with my family.
6. Making family time.
7. Family time
8. Spending time with family.
9. Time with my family.
10. Take time off and spend it with my family.
11. I get away and spend time with family. It's imperative to take 2 complete weeks off during the summer to reset.
12. I take time off each week to do something for myself or with my family. I still work a long week but I don't go in on Saturday or Sunday anymore.
13. Spending quality time with family.
14. Try to keep a balance by spending time with family.
15. I try to do some type of activity with my children.
16. Spending time on time on projects and with family.
17. Talk to my spouse, having dinner with a close friend.
18. I used to exercise but that has largely stopped. I spend time with family and forget it for the evening, sun will rise tomorrow.
19. Plan and schedule family and friend time.
20. Try to still attend a lot of school activities but schedule "date nights" with my wife.
21. Really try to take down time at home; do things with my family and really make the weekends my own.
22. Time with family and friends.
23. Stress is constantly there as a superintendent. I do not feel stress is necessarily bad. Try to use it and embrace it to improve job performance. Getting harder to do. Get away, spend time with family.
24. Taking personal/vacation days when stressed to be with my family.
25. I spend time outside of school with family and friends.
26. Vacations, spend time with family.
27. I talk to my wife.
28. Step away from the routine - take time for family and friends or whatever you like to do – know when to say NO and stick with it.
29. family time,
30. Talk with my wife
31. Time with my family
32. My wife accompanies me to the many school and community obligations that are a part of my job.
33. spending time with family
34. Treasure time with family.
35. Family Time. Time with a group of friends not connected in any way to my work.
36. Time with family

37. Take a break - go camping, golfing, spend time with family, etc. The job will still be waiting for me. Often times I then go back refreshed and it's easier to tackle a difficult job.
38. A great home life that take my mind away from work.
39. Family
40. Making time to be with my family.
41. Forcing myself to take a day off every once in a while to spend time with my family.
42. Ensure I get family time.
43. Family time
44. Spend time with family
45. Hiking with my family.
46. Spend time with family and friends.
47. Grandchildren

Colleagues (*n* = 24, 8.6%)

1. Surround myself with a great team of district administrators. I try to leave the work at the office, when possible.
2. I network with other superintendents.
3. Surrounding myself with a top-notch team.
4. Keep them informed, conversations with colleagues, networking.
5. Find a set of colleagues to share your circumstances with.
6. Compartmentalize issues and talk through issues with other Superintendents.
7. Focus on the items through which I have control (my staff - the processes we have developed to minimize errors).
8. I work hard to employ and retain high quality Leadership Team Members to share in the responsibility of implementing our unified vision. I also set hard boundaries on work vs. home.
9. Networking with colleagues.
10. Rely on my immediate central office staff. Taking time to myself.
11. Surround myself with knowledgeable and loyal people.
12. Laughter, talking with colleagues.
13. Networking with colleagues.
14. Communication with trusted colleagues.
15. Talk with the school board president.
16. We try to have a loose, humorous, and trusting environment between the two others (secretary and treasurer) in the office. It helps that some folks do understand the pressure. I also have a couple of good colleagues that have the same situation in their districts close by. Networking helps.
17. Speak with colleagues.
18. Having a person to talk to that I trust.
19. Venting to Asst. Supt., setting boundaries with board members in a nice and professional manner, and remembering that it is a marathon and not a sprint.
20. Time with other superintendents.
21. Talking to my assistant superintendent and just venting helps as well. We can do that with each other and it helps.
22. Talk to colleagues

23. I have also tried to find other superintendents to confide in about issues.

24. Surrounding myself with other positive leaders.

Prayer/Meditation (*n* = 24, 8.6%)

1. Prayer
 2. Prayer
 3. Pray about the work I have to do and ask God for the wisdom and strength to make decisions that are best for my students.
 4. Prayer
 5. My faith in God enables me to put my trust in Him rather than in my own wisdom.
 6. Prayer
 7. Faith in God
 8. Prayer
 9. Do what I believe is right. Pray about situations and guidance.
 10. Prayer. Patience. Perseverance. Our kids are worth doing this important work. I don't want them to be victims of this bad system.
 11. My Christian faith helps in seeing myself as an instrument of God's will.
 12. Writing reflections and not acting when frustrated.
 13. Meditation, prayer
 14. Strong faith in God
 15. Faith
 16. I start every morning with prayer and reflection. I also try to be self-aware of when my mood is being affected by the level of stress.
 17. Meditation, when I leave work I don't take work home.
 18. Meditation/Quiet
 19. Meditation
 20. Meditation
 21. Engage in spiritual practices to help manage my stress levels.
 22. Prayer
 23. Reflection
 24. Deep breaths
-

Hobbies (*n* = 18, 6.4%)

1. I also subscribe to "wind therapy" I have a motorcycle and it is a great stress reliever.
2. Enjoy my hobby.
3. Cooking
4. Sports
5. Cook
6. Television
7. Hobbies
8. Watching movies,
9. I have other hobbies
10. Movies, cooking
11. I do residential construction projects for family and friends. I also garden.

12. I ride my motorcycle.
 13. Hobbies.
 14. Try to find other activities or interests not related to school work to involve myself in.
 15. Try to escape by watching movies or surfing the web.
 16. Work on projects at home and get away from the job.
 17. Mindless television and movies
 18. Participating in hobbies
-

Reading (*n* = 16, 5.7%)

1. Read
 2. Reading (for work and pleasure),
 3. Give myself permission to not do something for school I think I should do at least 1x/week, and do something special for myself once a week. Simple things like coffee and read a book.
 4. Reading
 5. Read
 6. Read
 7. Reading
 8. Reading
 9. Reading
 10. Reading
 11. Read a book
 12. Reading
 13. Reading
 14. Reading
 15. I read an hour each night before bed to unwind and let down.
 16. Reading for Pleasure
-

School Related (*n* = 16, 5.7%)

1. Get out of the office and visit school buildings - especially elementary schools and students in the primary grades. Helps one remember why we do what we do. Remember one cannot be all things to all people, embrace your role, and try not to take the office home with you. Everything will still be there the next day or whenever you return.
2. I actually enjoy going to school events where I can connect with more positive students and parents.
3. Take breaks during the day to walk outside around the campus.
4. Educate, educate, and educate all stake holders to help us view things with a similar perspective.
5. Delegate duties, work on days and at hours when the office is normally closed.
6. By simply getting away from the office. Going out the school buildings to see the students and staff puts everything back into perspective for me.
7. I take walks to visit students.
8. I go into the classroom, especially primary grades and see the reason for my work.

9. Visiting the schools to see students perform or be educated in unique ways is the best thing to remind me of the good that is being accomplished in our district.
 10. Consoling myself that I can "retire" at any time if it gets too overwhelming and focusing my attention on the great things WE ARE accomplishing for our students and community. Looking at the next task and not the mountain ahead. Focusing on the WHY? Taking moments to visit students.
 11. Getting into buildings to see kids.
 12. Campus walks to see students engaged. Reminds me why I am here.
 13. Participate in positive events, attend school athletic competitions.
 14. Try to enjoy school ECA events as what I am choosing to do for enjoyment rather than work.
 15. Sending office personnel home early on occasion as a "reward" but allows me to complete tasks without interruption, working late or coming in on weekends when things are quiet.
 16. I know that I am making a positive difference--which gives me the energy and focus. There are situations that require more time. I consider my job a six day a week job--year round of at least 10 hours per day.
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Unhealthy (*n* = 12, 4.3%)

1. As a first year superintendent, this has been difficult because of moving away from family, friends, and my church. My coping strategy has mainly been snacking and eating, which has not helped in my health.
 2. Gripe about the General Assembly and go on with it.
 3. Daydream about doing mean things to School Board Members.
 4. Eat and get fat.
 5. Drink!
 6. Alcohol
 7. I drink a lot of beer.
 8. Coors Light
 9. Heavy alcoholic intake.
 10. I drink too much and smoke too much
 11. I drink
 12. Eating (not a good choice)
-

Getting Away ($n = 7, 2.5\%$)

1. Sometimes I go home and do nothing to kind of de-stress. An evening out to see a show often helps.
 2. Being very deliberate about taking time out of work.
 3. Sometimes just getting away for a while.
 4. I also use my vacation time to recharge, which is important. I do love my job and age 55 do not see retirement in the near or even slightly distant future. I also recognize I have a great school board--which can be a point of stress and work in an excellent school corporation.
 5. I try to walk away at more reasonable hours.
 6. Time away, even though it seems I am never truly away.
 7. I also take a two week vacation and try to go somewhere I don't have access to email or cell phone very often to get unplugged
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Not Coded ($n = 36, 13.2\%$)

1. I don't really have any strategy.
2. Getting together with friends.
3. I do not do a good job combating stress.
4. None, I deal with the situation unfortunately. It is a terrible way to have to work.
5. I take anxiety medications.
6. None
7. Try to relax on weekends, particularly Sunday.
8. I have tried to spend more time with my friends.
9. Visit with good friend couple times a week.
10. Socialization outside of work.
11. Blood pressure medication helps a lot, but I am not, by nature, a reactionary person. I believe that the superintendent must keep a level head and respond appropriately in a calm and thoughtful manner when tragedies/crises occur is key.
12. Trying to find balance between work and home.
13. Friends
14. I have great friends and we get together to laugh and relax. I have a dog that helps calm me down.
15. Humor!
16. It's just a job - take a pause, and don't take the work home.
17. Balance
18. To paraphrase Maya Angelou- I do the best I can until I know better. Then when I know better, I do better.
19. Experience
20. Shutting door for an hour a day.
21. Knowledge is power; consulting others in areas of most stress to find solutions.
22. Communication, chunking the work load.
23. I try to relax.
24. I try to set aside an allotted period of time to deal with email daily as opposed to answering emails continuously. However, that is difficult because folks expect a response within 24 hours and email starts to stack up quickly.

25. Shifting focus for quality personal time.
 26. No particular strategies. Time takes care of issue.
 27. Down time
 28. None. I just roll with it.
 29. I just suck it up and deal. You don't have time to lament your woes- you're always on your A game and the moment you're not, someone will be there to take advantage of the situation.
 30. Seeking employment outside of education.
 31. I get the work done by getting up early and by staying up late.
 32. Sleep
 33. Write out my frustrations about various issues, then give it some time before deciding whether to send the response.
 34. Working on that part.
 35. Employing proven time management strategies like to-do lists and calendar task scheduling.
 36. I try to delegate more work to others capable of doing the work.
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